

James 1:19-21 – March 27, 2022
Responding To the Last Days of Insanity
J.D. Farag

Let's get started. James chapter 1, beginning in verse 19.
I'll ask you to stand if you're able, if not where you're seated is fine, you can follow along as I read.

James inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes and says, **"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because**

[verse 20]

human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Therefore,

[verse 21]

get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you."

Let's pray. If you would, please join with me.

Thank You Lord, so much for Your Word and thank You Lord, that we are the recipients of a first-hand miracle in every sense of the word with Mike and Micah, and Lord, we also pray for Judy as well.

Lord, You are good, You are good, You are God, and there is nothing too hard for You.

Lord, now we are assembled in this Your church, in this place, those that are watching online as well, a part of this, and we approach this humbly posturing ourselves, knowing that You have something that You want to speak into our lives today.

There's some things You want to show us here in this portion that we have before us in Your Word today and that's why we're here, Lord.

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So we're going to ask You as we always do and as only You can, to keep our minds from wandering or being distracted because we don't want to miss anything that You would have to say to us today in and through Your Word.

Lord, we want to have ears to hear and hearts to receive and take heed to Your Word. So Lord speak, Your servants are listening. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk to you today about four ways we as Christians can respond to the ever-increasing insanity in the world today. If you're anything like me and I suspect that you are, it's becoming abundantly clear that this world has gone completely mad.

Would you agree?

I mean, it is crazy. It's almost an understatement. The insanity seemingly getting worse with each passing day. And it's not easy to remain sane in a world that's insane and getting more insane with each passing day. I mean, it's really as we talked about in the Prophecy Update, a sign of the times, as we say, maybe that's another understatement. But this is what we're told the world would look like at the time of the end. Good would be evil and evil would be good. The perilous times of the last days. It's not that it's near, It's here, we're living in it. And as we talked about in the Update, this is how it ends, this is the end, we are at the end. The question is often asked, Well, how long have we been in the last days?

Well, you may not like this answer, but the truth of the matter is we've been in the last days for about 2000 years. These are the last days, but now it's the last hour as we see the day fast approaching.

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And thankfully, God inspired James by the Holy Spirit to provide us with biblical and practical wisdom concerning our own sanity in a world of insanity.

And the first one is in verse 19, and it's to be quick to listen. We're off to a great start, right?

So here James exhorts us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, which we'll talk about more in a moment.

Now, if you were to ask me what I thought was one of the biggest problems in the life of a Christian, this would certainly be at the top of the list when it comes to being a listener, a good listener, especially in these last days; just really stopping and caring enough to really listen to people. We don't do that. You know why, right?

Because when they're talking - Oh, we pretend like we're listening and we insert the uh-huhs and oh, is that right at hopefully the right moment until we realize that we're busted.

You did - Did you hear what I just said?

Oh, yeah. Wait, what did you just say?

I wasn't really listening because I was thinking about what I wanted to say when you were saying what you had to say. Oh, come on, don't look at me like that.

Question: How is it, and I ask this of myself, how is it that we in these last days expect to get Jesus to people and people to Jesus if we're unwilling to listen?

I mean, we're so bent on saying what we have to say, because obviously what we have to say is more important than what other people have to say.

Well, have you ever thought about just not speaking and letting them speak and listen to what they're saying?

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You might be surprised to find out that what they're saying to you may be the very thing that the Holy Spirit prompted them to say for such a time as that so that you could respond to what they just said.

Doubtless you've heard that saying that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. And I don't think that there's anything that ranks as high on the list of showing someone that you care that when you listen to them and I mean, really, listen, listen to what they're saying, sometimes even repeating back to them what you think they said to make sure that it is what they said.

And what you'll find is, it is so rare, this is like the lost jewel in the body of Christ today to actually care enough to really listen to someone.

Be quick to listen. I mean, jump at the opportunity that the Lord has presented you to listen. And here's the thing, people don't feel safe, especially within the context of a church setting, sadly, because you'll ask them, Hey, how you doing?

And usually the response is something to the effect of, Hey, I'm great, praise the Lord.

How are you?

Praise the Lord, I'm great.

No, you're not. How are you really doing?

You got a minute?

Oh, I wasn't expecting that response. Hey we'll do lunch.

No, you won't. You just want to get out of it now because you just got yourself into something that could take a little bit of time.

What about just listening to them and letting them share with you - and don't try - sometimes - I like this saying, it's

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usually in the context of marriage: They don't need your mouth, they need your shoulder.

Let me try that again because I don't think I did a very good job that time. People don't need us to talk, they just need someone to talk to. They need a shoulder to cry on. They need someone that they can just talk to and have that person listen to them.

And don't try - because here's - okay, I'll speak for myself again because I know you're more spiritual than I am. As someone is talking to me, I'm thinking about all of the answers to fix the problem. And not only that, because I'm the pastor, after all, I've got all the verses too.

Well, thank you very much for bringing that up. That would be chapter this and verse that.

Really?

Stop talking. Start listening.

Be s-l-o-w to speak (Speaking very slowly) and quick listen.

I mean, I'm on it. No, I'd like to listen to what you have to say. And oh, my goodness, you will be surprised.

You know, it's sad. We've got this backwards. Instead of being quick to listen and slow to speak, were quick to speak and slow to listen.

And is it any wonder that those many opportunities that the Lord presented to us and for us to speak into that person's life is now gone because we wouldn't listen.

Just listen to them. It doesn't mean you don't speak; just be slow to speak and be quick to listen. I'm really dragging my feet because I know this second one, verse 20, (Sighing)

Slow to anger. Owie Maui. So this is an issue, and this is an area, I'm just being very open with you, in my life that God

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has dealt with me on over the years and especially in these last days because my default is especially when I'm watching, not listening, because I have it on mute, something on TV, a news broadcast and someone comes on and I'm looking at them and I'm thinking, Oh! (Growling sound) I'm angry!

Just seeing their face makes me angry. Forget hearing their name, just seeing their face makes me angry. You know what I'm talking about because that face just came to mind when I said that.

[Laughter]

I shared with First Service that the way God has given me the victory in this area, and I don't stand before you, I think I'd be disingenuous at best and dishonest at worst if I came off as you know, having this area under control. I still struggled greatly in the area of unrighteous anger.

There is a difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger because see, unrighteous anger is what somebody perceived has done to you, makes you angry.

And so how God has dealt with me on this is He's let me see them through His eyes as someone who needs Jesus, someone that Jesus loves, someone that Jesus died for.

By the way, this is why in Matthew 5, Jesus said, **"Pray for your enemies, those who speak evil of you and despitefully use you."**

We talked about this in the Update, I'll pray for them all right. (Evil laugh)

Heavenly Father, get them!

No, that's - Here's what happens when you start praying for them: You cannot remain angry with them. It changes the whole

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complexion because now you're seeing that person that heretofore you've been angry with through different eyes.

And instead of being angry with them, you actually start to feel sorry for them because they need Jesus. If the rapture happens, they'll be left behind and they'll enter into the seven year tribulation, the most horrific period of human history, as recorded in the Book of Revelation specifically.

If they're met with their untimely death and they're not born-again of the Spirit of God, they will enter into a Christ-less eternal Hell.

Well, that's kind of a game-changer, isn't it? And I'm angry at them?

Be slow to anger. This is one of those places in God's Word where, and there's many, but we're provided with the why behind the what.

Namely, that of why we should be slow to become angry, being that of what anger does, unrighteous anger, and more importantly does not accomplish.

First, unrighteous anger is very destructive and damaging. And second, unrighteous anger does not accomplish the righteousness of God.

And I tell you, it's easier said than done, as they say, **"The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

Especially as crazy as things are getting, it's hard not to get angry. I kind of - this last week, I just got to be very transparent when I share this, but I just let that anger again get a hold of me, this unrighteous anger at all the evil. And my daughter says to me one day, Baba, you're really grumpy. That's because I'm really grumpy.

Why are you so grumpy?

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Because I'm very angry.

Why are you so angry?

And I was kind of taking it out on her, very short in my responses. Don't look at me like, you know, I'm supposed to be perfect. I'm a sinner, just like you. And so I just got so convicted, and of course I'm teaching on it, so that didn't help either.

[Laughter]

So I just - the Holy Spirit, that still, small voice just prompted me, You need to ask your daughter for forgiveness. So I said, Sabia, I'm sorry. Forgive me for being so grumpy.

And she started yelling. No, she didn't. She was like, Awe, bringing it in, bring it in. So it just dissipated everything.

You know, I think in parenting, we can very quickly do so much damage, especially when we discipline in anger. Be slow to anger.

Be angry, but don't sin your anger. Jesus got angry. Did Jesus sin?

Absolutely not. But it was a righteous anger because of what they were doing in God's house to God's people. I would have loved to have been a fly on a camel or whatever that was there in the temple that day to see that.

You know, He actually made a whip. I wish - I kept looking, If you find it, let me know. I was looking for the verse that says He used it. That would have been when He turned the tables over, it says He made a whip. I don't think He beat anybody. I would have. But that's, you know - and you would have too.

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But you know, He was angry! You've turned My house; My Father's house shall be a house of prayer, and you've turned it into a den of thieves. Out with you!

And He throws the tables out. I imagine Him just cracking that whip. Oh, I would have loved to see that. That's righteous anger. That's righteous anger.

Why do you emphasize that?

Because there does come a time where righteous anger is warranted. But I think if we're honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that our anger is more often than not unrighteous because of what someone said to me or didn't say.

How's that one?

Oh, you know what I'm talking about. They walked right by me and didn't say, Hi.

Really?

Wow, that's unrighteous anger and some of us are really good at holding onto stuff like that for a long time.

And I mean, the shelf life on that anger is longer than a Twinkie. You've got preservatives in that thing, and you hang on to it and you just let it fester.

You know there's two kinds of anger in the original language of the Greek New Testament. One of them is the Greek word, "thymos", where we get our English word for thermos. It's that seething, just I mean, festering and you know, building up of the anger.

And then there's the other kind of anger that just is explosive, just, you know, short fuse

and then that's it. They're both unrighteous, so nice try. I tried that already, I'll just let you know, don't waste your

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time. I tried to make one of them righteous; neither of them are, they're both on unrighteous.

Be slow to anger.

Well, this brings us to the third one, the first part of verse 21, and it's that of getting rid of moral filth. Now first, it almost seems like James is turning this abrupt corner of sorts, were it not for the word, "therefore" and what it's there for.

That's not a play on words. That's what the word, "therefore" is there for.

In other words, everything I just said is there for this reason. Be slow to speak, quick to listen, slow to anger. And then he says, therefore, that's all therefore this.

What?

Getting rid of moral filth. Don't you find it interesting; I don't know if you noticed it, that James would be inspired to emphasize the overflow of wickedness and evil that was even then so prevalent?

So how does this connect?

Well, think this through with me, that God-given intellect that we have to be able to reason and think through things. So now I'm slow to speak, but I'm quick to listen, and the result, by the way, the fruit of that is that I am also becoming slow to anger.

So now that kind of has this effect on my life of realizing this is an evil world in which I'm living, and I need to put off and get rid of that moral filth.

As we're going to see, Lord willing, next week, he's going to take this to the next level and talk about being a doer of the word and not merely a hearer of the word.

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Well, this ties into our fourth and final one, which I want to spend the remainder of our time on today because it is key to all of this, especially in this the last days as we know it. It's that of humbly accepting God's Word.

Now, here again we have another why behind the what concerning one "humbly", keyword here, humbly accepting the Word of God that was planted in us.

Oh, the Word of God was planted in us?

Yes. It's not a question of, was the Word of God planted?

The question is: Was the supple soil of my heart such that the seed could take root and germinate and sprout and bear fruit?

And the reason why humility is so key is because absent humility, we have no hope of that Word, the seed of God's Word planted in our hearts, bearing any fruit.

So once we have rid ourselves of moral filth and overflowing wickedness, the implanted Word is able to sprout. And not only does it sprout and germinate and bear fruit, but it will save our souls.

I really don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of just this one truth about humility being the key to God's Word that was planted, the seed of God's Word germinating and growing and bearing fruit in our lives.

And this because of that well-known parable that Jesus taught recorded in Matthew's Gospel Chapter 13, I would encourage you to join me there. I want to begin reading in verse 18.

We affectionately refer to it as Jesus refers to it, the parable of the Sower.

So the seed is sown, broadcast, the farmer broadcast the seed. Upon which soil the seed falls is not on the one who broadcasts it or sows it.

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And there are four different types of soils in the parable. So Jesus, now in verse 18, is going to explain, as He just taught the parable, now He's going to take the time to explain what it is that the parable means.

So He says, verse 18, **"Listen then, to what the parable of the Sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path."**

That explains a lot, doesn't it?

Verse 20, **"The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time."**

And here's why. Interesting, listen to this.

"When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed [verse 22] falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

But [verse 23. Thank God for verse 23] the seed falling on good soil [supple soil, humble soil of the heart] refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding 100, 60 or 30 times what was sown."

I grew up in a small farm town, Tekoa, Washington. I would come to find out later after I got saved and started reading the Bible that Tekoa is actually a town in the Bible.

It was named after that town. Don't worry, the Tekoa I grew up in was nothing like that, I'm sure, very small town, farm town.

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Just to give you an idea to put it into perspective, my graduating class of 1980: 16 people. Okay, go ahead and laugh, that's all right, I won't take it personally. 16 people in my graduating class.

In fact, after I graduated, the school became even smaller and had to consolidate with Oakesdale, another small town close by. Now, whenever the harvest time would come, the starting of school was predicated upon getting those crops in.

Why?

Because there was just a short window. It was weather-driven, and you knew what was coming. And as soon as that came and fall came and winter after it, you would lose it. You better get those crops in, or you would lose them.

Now, when I was - actually it was even before high school, they would hire a bunch of us, and we would go through the fields and there would be these weeds that they would have us pull in order for the wheat to grow and produce a better yield. Same thing with lentils, but wheat was the main one.

And I would learn later that it all depended upon the soil. That farmer's crop depended solely upon preparing the soil in the spring when they would plant the crops.

If you didn't get that planted in supple soil, forget it, there is no harvest to be had. And they would take great care.

But here's the problem, and here's our problem, you have to break up the hard ground.

Hosea of the prophet, "**Break up, the fallow ground,**" the hard ground. We don't want that.

How's that seed going to implant in us and bear fruit in our lives?

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Well, it takes a breaking of the soil. And we don't want that plow, we don't want the farmers plow.

As A.W. Tozer describes it, to come in as plows always come in, noisy and loud and businesslike, breaking through and breaking down into that ground.

Oh, Lord, what are you doing? Why are you doing?

Oh, I gotta, I got to make the soil supple; otherwise, the seed is just going to bounce off of it or it might somehow find a way to sprout, but it'll be short lived.

No, I've got to break up that hardness in order for My word to bear fruit.

It was a couple three weeks ago now, we did a topical teaching on brokenness, "Why God Breaks Us". I'll tell you, none of us like it when God breaks us.

But if you're anything like me and I suspect that you are, while you would never want to have to go through it again, you would never trade what God did in that painful breaking for anything in the world.

When there's been a breaking in my life and a humbling in my life, man, God's got me right where He needs me to be.

And wouldn't you agree that we're living at a time in this world as crazy as it is - I mean, I'll take it a step further and say in closing, by the way, that I really - this is very sincere and the Lord knows my heart when I say this, I really do not know how it's even possible that we as Christians are going to be able to survive, let alone thrive in the days ahead, absent the Word of God.

David would write in the Psalms, **"It's a light unto my path, a lamp unto my feet."**

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How are we going to navigate the insanity of this world absent the Word?

Well, how am I going to have the Word?

Well, you have to be humbled, emphasis mine.

You know that Proverb that says, "Humble yourself and the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

Well, I want to share with you the JDV of that Proverb. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, or He will do it for you.

Oh, I got to a witness on that one.

He resists the proud; we're going to see that, by the way.

Spoiler alert, James is going to, I mean, get up in our grill when it comes to resisting the proud.

He knows the proud from a far off like, get away from Me! But He gives grace to the humble. He gives grace. He exalts the humble and He humbles the exalted.

I think I like the exalting the humble better because I've tasted from the cup of the humbling of the exalted. I'm at the front of that line, and I've got the scars to prove it, I'll tell you.

How do I get rid of all moral filth?

How do I become a man not given over to unrighteous anger, slow to anger?

How do I become that man or woman of God that's slow to speak but quick to listen?

Right here. (Pointing hard at the Bible)

Humbly, humble yourself in the site of the Lord. Humble yourself, and when you do, the Word of God will do what God's Word needs to do in your life.

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And you want it to do what it needs to do because again, I just, I honestly say this, and I mean this, and I believe this with all of my heart.

In the days ahead between now and when that trumpet sounds, man.

Well, let me let me flip it over.

Did I already say I was closing?

Okay, this will be the final closing then.

Let me flip it over and back it up and say it this way. Just even getting to this point, where we're at now presently, had it not been for the Word of God and the God of the Word, I know for myself I would not be standing here before you today.

Now, that's then and here we are now. Let's talk about what happens after this.

How are we going to make it in the days ahead?

If that's how we made it to this point, how are we - and it's - I know this is not popular.

By the way, Jeremiah, can't wait, Thursday night, Chapter 1, the Weeping Prophet God says, I'm calling you, I'm going to enable you because God's calling is God's enabling, and I'm going to put My words in your mouth.

And here's the thing Jeremiah, nobody's going to - in fact, they're going to, they're going to hate your guts. They already do, but they're going to hate your guts even more and not one person is going to respond to you.

But I'm calling you, and you're going to speak the words that I put in your mouth to speak because judgment is coming, the end is coming and you're going to speak that to My people because of all the evil and the wickedness in the world.

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And I mean, the parallels are chilling, if I can say it like that, for lack of a better way of saying it. If what we've seen heretofore is any indication of what's coming and I truly believe it is, oh...

We had better, we would do well to be numbered among those who will humble ourselves and humbly accept the Word of God, because that's the only way we're going to make it through this until that trumpet sounds.

Kapono, why don't you come on up?

I'll have you stand up; we'll close in prayer and close in song.

What I was going to say was, it's only going to get worse. I mean, that was Jeremiah's problem, if I can say it like that. I mean, the message he had was, Hey, you guys, you have no idea what's coming.

And in some ways, I think we're right there today.

Only this time this is it is. And things are not going to get better, even though it does seem - we talked about this in the Update, that with the lifting of some restrictions, don't think for a second that we'll ever go back to normal.

It ain't going to happen.

Yeah, but Pastor, come on, everything's kind of loosening up and going back.

You need to listen to the Update today. That's all I'm going to say. It's not going to get better; it's not going to get better.

I think that hymn of old. I love it. *'I need Thee, every hour I need Thee.'*

It's more like every moment I need Thee. Oh, Lord, I need Thee.

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Father in heaven, thank You. Thank You for your Word.

Lord, thank You for inspiring James to write what we've seen here today and not just seen but hopefully heard and will take heed to.

Lord, we do face perilous days ahead in the times in which we're living. And we not only need Your Word, we need Your Spirit, the Spirit of God with the Word of God if we're to have any hope in the days ahead.

Lord, I pray that we would be numbered amongst those of whom it is said, they humbled themselves in the sight of the Lord. Lord we do humble ourselves before You and thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.