

What is your religion worth?

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[0:00] Christ's name, amen. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. I want you to go ahead and find your place in James chapter 1. We have been working our way slowly through the epistle of James. It is a great study together because there is so much application to be had and we need that. We need to see how to apply the word to our life and when we come to the epistle of James, it is a great source of that even being referred to as the Proverbs of the New Testament for that reason because there is so much practical application to be had to apply to our faith. And so today will be just a good, just very, very practical look as we come to chapter 1 verse 26 and we'll be looking at this together just as a, our heart expressing a genuine faith. And, and this is going to be what we see this morning is the expressions of genuine faith. Now I, I'll start as we, as we turn there, just a couple of things. One, we had some, we had D groups, not D groups, we had home family, what do we call them? Summer family fellowships, if I can get it right. Summer family fellowships started meeting this past Wednesday. And so at four or five houses around town, we gathered, some had groups that were too large to meet together and some are still getting schedules adjusted. But we had a great, great turnout just in all of our groups across the city. Everybody is invited to come to one of those. And if you're new here and you want to get to know people, that'd be a great opportunity for you to do that. So just, if you want after the service, just come to me and just say, Hey, I'd love for our family to go to one of those, or I'd love to be able to go to one of those. If you could just tell me how, and I'd love to tell you how to do that and connect to one of these groups. Okay. Uh, but just great turnout, great fellowship together at my house. We had one and it was just sweet fellowship with, with people together. And, uh, I was just reminded of the blessing that those times are, uh, getting together. It's a little awkward since we're going deeper on the, on the sermon. And since I'm the one that preached it, you know, uh, it's like, it's kind of hard because if there's any, you know, challenging thoughts or whatever, it's like,

I don't want to say it because James preached it. So at my group, it's probably a little more awkward. Right. Uh, but I think all the others, I think had a great, great discussion surrounding that. And so this week we'll be discussing this, uh, passage and looking deeper at it, finding application. And so as you listen, it'd be a good opportunity for you to listen that way, because when we have those home fellowships, you'll be able to, uh, flesh it out a little bit.

So that's just, uh, some good stuff. Great. We're going to do that all the way through the summer, uh, up until we do VBS backyard Bible club. And then we'll kick back into a regular Wednesday night schedule after that, where we have children and youth and adult Bible study going on, uh, all at the same time. Uh, so that's Wednesday night. So this week we had a little trip to take because Carly had a, a, uh, follow-up appointment, uh, for, she dealt with cancer. Carly's down here on the front row, so I can embarrass her. Just wave everybody. So she's got all her hair back now. She's looking all cute. And, uh, but she's been off at school. And so she's, she was coming back for this appointment. And so we, uh, we're going to, uh, because it's in Memphis and her school's in Branson, uh, then, so we were going to end up meeting over in Memphis. So that's about a six hour

drive. Okay. So that's not terrible, uh, but it's a drive, right? And, and so then before that, I, I found out I needed to meet with somebody in Oklahoma city, meet with a pastor to talk about, uh, forming an association of churches in our state. And, and so I had to meet with him. The only day that he could meet was on Thursday. So right before we leave for Memphis, I've got to go to Oklahoma city. So I've got to drive two hours to Oklahoma city and then two hours back and then drive to Memphis. Okay. And, and the verse was coming to mind, count it all joy when you face various trials and temptations, right? And just, oh man. And so we're on the road, we get on the road, we're, we're headed to Memphis. Brandy and I have a good fellowship in the car.

We like riding together because it gives us a chance to really talk and spend, you know, spend time as we're driving. And so we were having a great time. And then Carly calls, uh, she's on her way down from, from school and her car breaks down. So she's in Arkansas somewhere.

[5:07] I think you need a passport to go to Arkansas. If you're from there, I'm just kidding. Um, it's, it's, it's, it's a different world and, and there's mountains in some part and then the other parts there's not, but she was driving through the mountain parts and her car just gave her a little Carly, uh, but I'm, I'm not going down this road with you any further. So Carly, of course, and it's the transmission. So she's going up and down these Hills and it finally, it just gave up the ghost. She pulls over. And so she's, she's a little upset, you know, rightfully so. And now, so we're going to take a detour off the highway. So I drove two hours and then two hours. We're going to drive six hours and now we're going to drive an hour and some up and then an hour back onto the road and we're going to get back on course. And, and so I'm, I'm a little bummed, a little frustrated. Carly's upset. You know, we're, we're, we get there. She, and you know, she's daddy's girl. And so she, she's teary eyed and I'm holding her. She's my baby girl. It's okay.

We're going to get through this, all that kind of stuff. And so then we, we decided as we do, we joke with each other when hard times come. And so we're joking with each other and well, it could be worse. Hey, I don't have cancer. Right. And there's positives in this. And so we laugh at that kind of stuff. Other people hear it and they're horrified like, Oh, we're like, Hey, we've been through so much. Hey, at least we don't have cancer at least, you know, this, or at least that. And then we laugh together and whatever. So we get back on the road.

And, and before we leave town, we stop at this little convenience store. We get some, some drinks for the road. The lady, you know, scans the barcode on them. And then she, she asks us, are you glad they caught that guy? And we're like, I have no idea what she's talking about. Caught that guy. No, I, I said, I don't know what you mean. She said, the guy that was on the killing spree. And we had just joked, like, at least he didn't get killed. At least he didn't get kidnapped at least whatever, you know? And, and this, this lady is just dead serious. And she said, aren't you glad they caught him? And they caught the guy that was on the killings where he killed somebody in Alabama. And then he killed a couple of people in Oklahoma and he killed somebody just up the road. And they caught him in the woods, just up the road. And we're just sitting there like, are you kidding? Aren't you glad you're alive?

Aren't you glad that you made it to church this morning? Aren't you glad? I mean, you've got stuff going on in your life and it's hard and there's challenges and there's trials and there's all these kinds of things and they're real and they're, they're difficult. They're challenging. Aren't you glad you're here? Aren't you glad you're alive? And if you are alive in Christ, aren't you glad you're saved? Come on. Aren't you glad you've got the Lord in your life? And, and as we're walking through the epistle of James, this is really, James is writing a letter to people that are going through challenges and trials. They are scattered people, as he said in the first couple of verses, as he introduces the letter. These are people that are scattered under persecution. So the reality of trials and challenges for them are really there.

If this is not a lightweight letter, I want to hear from the Lord on what do we do in these circumstances that we're in? And that's when he begins in unfolding James, who is probably closer to Jesus than any other New Testament figure because it is after all his biological brother in part. Growing up with Jesus, he knows Jesus. Then confronted with Jesus after the resurrection, he's born again and his life is changed. And now all of a sudden, everything that he grew up with about

Jesus, everything he knew about Jesus now comes into perspective because he has the Holy Spirit in him now. And he understands the gospel and the reality of Christ. And, and now James is a man who is a picture of a life transformed by Jesus. And, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he describes himself, he's describing in the most difficult circumstances, which he himself went through in Jerusalem and persecution that has broken out in Jerusalem. And he has endured it for a couple of years. He endures persecution there. And yet he emerges as a leader of the church. One of the elders of the church, one of the Jerusalem. So what happened in his life? The resurrection happened. Jesus revealed himself to him. He believed the gospel and he was changed. And now as a changed man, he knows what it's like to live. He knows what it's like to have a living faith as opposed to a dead faith because he's been brought to life by Jesus. And this resurrection power that's at work in his life, as Paul describes it, that resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in your mortal bodies.

[10:42] That power that is at work, that power that is at work, is at work in you. And if you're alive, you ought to know it. And if there's life in you, you ought to sense the reality of it. And people around you ought to actually see that there is animation and life in you. That's the reality that James is painting about this living faith. He's going to describe it as a faith that's living as opposed to dead.

And the difference of this is life and death. You got living faith, it's going to be seen. It's going to be visible. And so when he comes here to verse 26, he is really beginning in the practicum section of this where now it's going to be brought to real life. Now you want to see what it looks like. Here's how you see what it looks like. He dealt with principles and now he deals with practice. And the principles of God's sovereignty and God's wisdom and all of those things that we looked at now coming into practice. What's it going to look like in your life, even if things are difficult, even if you're questioning God at times, or you're challenged by the circumstances of your life.

So with that, let's stand and let's read this passage together. James chapter one, verse 26. We're going to make it through two more verses. I mean, are you, we're making progress guys.

After one, verse 26. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 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. Father, may you bless the reading of your word. May you speak this morning. May you help us to see with great creativity how to apply these truths to our life. To be doers of the word.

[13:08] Lord, help us not to be hearers only. God, help us to be doers of the word. Help us to be characteristically doers. And if someone doesn't know Christ, I pray, Father, that even in this, they will see the reality of the gospel as it plays out in practical life and that they'll see their need for Jesus and be saved. So Lord, be with us this morning. Guide us, direct us, give us wisdom.

And we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Talking this morning about a living faith that expresses itself.

Living faith is a, as we said last week, is a doer of the word. Dead faith is contrasted here. And even in this passage, moving on to show that contrast that describing dead faith as being something that's assuming a lot and it's deceived and in the end it's worthless. And this is dead faith.

And he puts that up against this living faith that is pure and undiluted and not deceived, but is, ends up being blessed. And this is the picture of living faith. This living faith is something that expresses itself. It is not something intangible. It's tangible. You can see this.

It has a result in your life. It's not that they're, that we're working our way towards salvation.

Salvation is not by works. It's by faith. Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 reminds us of that. Paul said it so clearly.

[14:52] For by grace are we saved. Through faith. And this is not our own doing. It's the gift of God so that no one may boast. No one gets bragging rights in this. No one gets to say, I did enough.

And yet, the reality is, in our spiritual life, there is a tangible reality of the effect of faith in our life.

That you're going to see the results of faith, or even as scripture describes it so often, the fruit of your faith.

The fruit of the Spirit is goodness, kindness, gentleness, self-control. These kind of characteristics are the tangibles, the things that you can see about your faith, not just what you say about your faith.

You can say you believe, but I can see you believe. And that's the difference that James is getting at here. It is outward, and it is inward.

And so we see it playing itself out, even in the application to the tongue, and then in the hands as you minister to others, and then even as you deal with your own soul, dealing with holiness and righteousness before God.

[16:06] And so, and I hear this phrase often, you know, about religion. We talk about being religious, and you have maybe even said this phrase yourself.

You may have said, well, it's not about religion, it's about a relationship. And that is actually partially true.

But it's not completely true. And you hear it in this verse. Because although it is about a relationship, and it begins with a relationship, and it's about the relationship with Christ, religion is the expression of tangible ways that you demonstrate that faith, that relationship.

So it's not just that I'm, it's not about religion, it's just about a relationship. Actually, it's about both. And what James is saying, it's both.

You may be tempted at times to think it's only the relationship. And it is a relationship. But it's also religion. And it's the expression of that.

[17:21] That's why I'm using this word, expressions of faith. Faith, living faith, is expressed. You see it. You see it in this passage used adjectivally.

Okay, English is not my first. I mean, it's my first language. But it's not my first, you know, strength in study. Okay, so I have to look these words up. What does that mean?

And just talking about a descriptive word about something. If something is religious, that means it characterizes religion.

Whereas if it's used as a noun or used in noun form, it's talking about the practice, the religion, the expressions of worship. And so you might remember that in the song, I am a man, I am a man, I am a real religious man.

From the great prophet Nacho Libre. Do you not know this? He's a religious man. Why? Because something is characteristic about him of these expressions as he takes care of all the orphans and does all these good deeds and tries to do the right thing even though he's misguided so many times along the way.

[18:47] Whether it's the Lord's chips or not. If you know, you know. Okay? So we're talking about these in terms of expressions.

And you see this at work all throughout this first chapter as he's talking about hearing the word and the speaking and the doing and all of these practical expressions of the faith.

And I think about that even as I was studying this and just thinking about even the book of Philippians and thinking, man, what a book that demonstrates the reality of this as Paul in Philippians is talking so much about being joyful, being joyful, being joyful.

And when you read the background to the letter to Philippians, you realize he's in prison. Right? And yet, he is over and over again just expressing joy that he has in the Lord.

And the practical living out of his faith. How do you know he's got faith? Well, he's got joy. And you see it at work in his life. It's the expression of living faith.

[20:00] You love, you express it. Ask your wife, husband. She wants you to express it. It's not like the man that said, or the wife that said, you never tell me you love me.

And the man, of course, we've been married 20 years. I told you when we began that I loved you. If I change my mind, I'll let you know. Right? No. That's not love.

It expresses itself. Sometimes it says it. Sometimes it does it. You see it in the expressions. Three expressions.

Three expressions. And this is how I've divided the text. Just in, first in watching your mouth, then in using your hands, and then in purifying your heart.

And the first is really dealing with the tongue. And it's so important when we start talking about the expression of living faith. Living faith expresses itself through controlled speech.

[21:14] It expresses itself. It expresses itself. It's not just the encouragement to be quiet. It is to be governed. A mouth that's governed.

You have to learn as a believer in Christ. And you sense this. A living faith is driving you toward obedience in these things.

And this issue of your mouth is actually critical. It's critical. The control of your mouth will be a factor in you confessing sin.

It'll be a factor in you proclaiming the gospel. If you don't learn to use your mouth and govern your speech, it affects everything about your life.

And this is the first issue that he's dealing with here. He's tying what we say to who we are in our innermost being. If we control our mouth, it's an indicator of something about our heart.

[22:23] If you don't control your mouth, it is an indicator of something about your heart. In fact, he ties the two together there, saying that on the one hand, you can bridle your tongue or deceive your heart.

See where he puts those together? There is a root issue that's playing itself out in your mouth. You're not preaching the gospel.

You're not confessing sins. You're saying things that are slanderous about your neighbor. You're gossiping about people, etc., etc. What is the condition of your mouth?

Is it being used for the glory of God? This is going to show where your heart's at. When you go to the doctor, how many of you have been to the doctor, and the doctor says, you tell him there's a few things, I'm not feeling well, I don't know what it is, I don't have energy, I don't have this or that, and what do they say?

Open your mouth. Let me take a look inside your mouth and see what's going on. And he takes a tongue depressor, and if you're a child and you have experienced this for the first time, you can remember the absolute horror of him sticking this piece of wood in your mouth and pressing it down, and you're like, what's he looking for?

[23:48] What's he doing in there? What's he trying to find in there? Is he going to see something in my mouth that's going to show that I'm sick? Well, yeah, there's going to be some indicators. As he looks in your mouth, and he's looking in your throat, he's trying to see if there's any redness, if there's any infection, if there's anything going on.

So we're coming to Dr. James here, and Dr. James is saying, why don't you open your mouth? Let's take a look and see what's going on in your mouth.

Because as he puts it in verse 26, if anyone thinks that he is religious, if he thinks he's characterized by religious expression, expressions of praise and worship and adoration of God, if he thinks that he is this, and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

And now he's exposed the heart of the problem. We are in danger of self-deception here.

For the unbeliever, it is not, keep in mind, this isn't about perfectionism. It's not perfection. It's about direction. It's the trajectory of our life.

[25:13] Am I going to stumble in these things? James says, yes, we all stumble in this issue. He goes on to say later. We all stumble in this with our tongue. All of us stumble here.

But what is the direction of my life? What's the trajectory of my life? It's not about perfection. It's about direction. And the Lord explained this with no uncertain terms as he's talking to the Pharisees in Matthew 12.

Jesus said, make a tree good and its fruit will be good. Or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad. For a tree is recognized by its fruit.

So James is not saying something new. James is only expounding what Jesus has already taught. We're, as disciples, learning the commands of Christ. We see those in the Gospels clearly as Jesus is giving his teaching.

And then you look through the epistles and you watch and all through the epistles it's the fleshing out of everything that Jesus has commanded. And now James is fleshing this out a little bit. He's showing it in real life, in real time.

[26:18] Make a tree good and its fruit will be good. Make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad. A tree is recognized by its fruit. And he looks at those Pharisees and he says, you brood of vipers, how are you who are evil?

How can you say anything good? For, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Say ah. Can everybody say that together? Say ah. Ah. Okay. Kids did really good with that. He says, if your tongue is not bridled, then there is a problem.

So, we know what it means to be bridled. Some of you have had horses or you ride horses and some of you grew up with that. You know how to ride a horse.

You know how to make it do what you want it to do. Brandy and I, when we first, I think it was when we were dating still, maybe we were married, newly married, and we went riding because Brandy grew up with horses and her dad had horses.

[27:28] He had about 14 horses and did trail rides and all this stuff. And so, he was the Marlboro man, me and my brothers called him. He was a tough guy, rugged boots, jeans, pickup, four-wheel drive, all of the above.

He was just a man's man. And, and I was a city boy, you know? And, and so we go riding and, and it's real easy.

You just, you just get up in the saddle and you just, you know, show the horse which way you want to go and, and he'll go, I suppose. And, I didn't even have boots to wear.

I can't remember what I wore, hiking boots. I looked like a, you know, total doofus, I bet. Looking back, you know, I'm like, oh, I so impressed her dad, right? And, get on this horse and, and, JB was the horse's name, I remember.

And, and I did not like that horse. Because that horse did not do anything that I asked it to do.

Nothing. And so we're riding along.

[28:32] Thankfully, we're in a little trail ride, right? Or kind of following each other down these trails. And, and so the horse is following along. But that horse did not do anything. And when I'm pulling one way, I'm like, come on, man, come on, you got to go this way.

And I'm kicking him on this side and kicking him on that side. I have no idea what I'm doing. And that horse, you could tell, he's just getting as frustrated as he can be with me. Because I'm telling him all kinds of stuff.

I'm giving him mixed signals. And, and it's all because I'm pulling on these reins. And it's got that bridle that's pulling his head. But it's also got that little bit in its mouth. And it's pulling back on his jaw.

And every time I yank on this thing like I'm yanking, he's getting madder and madder and madder. Until finally, he resisted completely. And it was about halfway on the trail ride when the horse decides, I'm going home.

And I mean, like, not just, it started picking up speed. It started picking up more speed. And then it was at a trot. And I am just bouncing all over the place.

[29:35] I am pulling every which way. He's yanking his head. He's headed to the house. You know? This bridle. And, and you've got to think of this picture that James is giving about your mouth.

It is so difficult to tame, he goes on to say. Horses have bridles, he said. Ships have rudders.

Tongue is so difficult for you to tame.

Can I get an amen? And if you don't bridle this, James is saying, if there's no willingness on your part because you think you've got to say everything that's on your mind, well, I just say what's on my mind.

I just like to say it like it is. I just like to tell people what for. And I like to, if I'm in a restaurant and things aren't right, I tell them every time. And I, I go through the details. You know what?

That is not a strength. You have no bridle. You're letting everything just, there's no gate.

[30:44] You say what you want to say, you do what you want to do, but it's telling you something about the condition of your heart. And the, the instruction here is that if this is the case, you need to be aware because you could be deceived in this and this kind of religion is

actually empty.

It's not the kind of faith that saves. This is not characteristic of a living faith. So be careful here. It's empty.

He uses this word empty. It means vain, devoid of power, lacking in content, non-productive. It can mean dead. There's no life. There's no animation to it.

There's nothing. There's nothing to it. It looks like it. You see it. It looks like something that's alive, but it's dead. This religion that you're looking at, this expression that you think may be religious or you think you're religious is actually nothing.

self-control is a fruit of the spirit. Even in Proverbs 21, which I did not write down, but I wrote the reference, Proverbs 21, that's in your Old Testament, after Psalms.

[32:18] Yeah. 21 verse 23 gives the great clarity of this.

Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble. What a truth.

How much of our trouble is because we can't control our mouth? Who? More than I'd like to think.

The fruit of the spirit is goodness, kindness, and self-control.

A governed tongue is an indicator of a living faith. It's demonstrating love for God and trust in God because remember, this is at a point where someone is dealing with the hardships of life and is questioning God.

So you've got to ask yourself about your tongue because it's not just the audible speaking that he's talking about here, but yes, how do you speak to your children?

[33:30] That could be an indicator of the condition of your heart when you're frustrated with your kids. You end up just yelling at them. When you're frustrated with your spouse, you end up just yelling and being hateful and saying hateful things.

But when you're facing the challenges and the crisis of life, how much are you questioning God? Because the point here is that living faith is the kind of faith that learns to govern its mouth when it's speaking to God.

when you're facing trials and tribulation and difficulty and saying, oh man, it's another dark cloud for me. Man, another problem in my life.

Why does all this stuff have to happen to me? God, why can you not do this in somebody else's life? The sinner over there that's living such a sinful life and you're questioning God and you're saying these things and God's saying, watch your mouth.

Do you believe God is sovereign? Do you believe He is all-wise? Do you believe that He is doing things in your life that you have no idea what the outcome is supposed to be?

[34:36] Do you not realize that the very suffering that your family's going through today may not be for you at all? It may be for your kids. It may be for your grandkids.

It may be that the things that you're going through and trusting Jesus for today are the things that are going to cause your grandkids to watch you and say, you know what? I need to trust Jesus like Grandma trusted Jesus.

I need to trust Jesus like Grandpa trusted Jesus. I need to trust Jesus like Dad and Mom trusted Jesus. It may not be for you. You have no idea what God is doing in the challenges of your life.

But as you examine yourself, the point is, living faith watches its mouth. And if you've got a problem here, you need to repent and get right with the Lord.

Two, it's not just in my mouth, it's actually working its way out in other ways. There's other expressions. It's using my hands and feet. Living faith expresses itself through compassionate care.

[35:48] Do you actually care about people? And he uses this example here, which is such a practical example. These problems never go away.

As he describes this in verse 26, he said, if anyone thinks he's religious, doesn't bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.

Compassionate care. Not just a controlled tongue. That's one expression. One way for you to gauge. But then also your compassionate care for others. People that can't do anything for you.

People that don't add to your life necessarily, but maybe they detract in some way or it costs or it's challenging in some way, especially when they are in affliction.

Meaning, seriously difficult situations. So not only are these people scattered as believers, but scattered as believers and they've got widows and orphans among them who are doubly, triply, quadruply afflicted.

[37:05] What do you do with people that need compassion? Do you really care? Can you see the expression of a heart that's been changed by Jesus and rescued by Christ?

Can you see that in the expression of how you care compassionately for people around you? Or are you too busy with your life and your stuff and your family and your issues to care?

Right? This is real religion. This is true religion. Right religion. Right expression toward God and faith that's living and expressible.

This is what it looks like. Do you care about people that need you? I mean, I'm thinking about our church and just all the families in our church. Just different things.

Illnesses, family members going through trouble. all serious, serious, serious stuff. And I'm having to think through that too and think, am I expressing caring compassion for those afflicted?

[38:21] I know of issues in nearly every family that I know in this room. Some of you, I don't know you very well, but I guarantee you've got stuff too.

Right? And there are areas where you are struggling. Do I really care? And as a body of Christ, this ought to be the characteristic of the body of Christ.

As Jesus described in the upper room to the disciples, the whole world is going to know that you're mine by your love for one another. That's how they're going to know. They're going to see it in you. They're going to see the expressions of worship in the body of Christ as we minister to each other, as we minister to needs in the body. This is pure and undefiled religion.

And he uses the word for pure there. It's catharos, which is where we get the word catharsis, purifying, cleansing. It's used in psychology and counseling to cleanse the mind.

[39:25] Soul cleansing. We literally use this word to mean something free of dirt and thus clean. Pure religion.

It's clean. It's good. It's wholesome. It's healthy. It's living. It's alive. And he says it's undefiled. It's an undefiled religion.

It's not diluted in any way. It's not contaminated. It's not polluted. It's diluted. And it's not diluted. There's no uncleanness and there's no impurity.

This kind of religion. I mean, I've got trees in my backyard and my backyard slopes down. Storm comes. The wind, a couple of times this year, has been really strong.

And a couple of times this year, we've had trees that just snapped off. I mean, like halfway up, you know, snapped off. Big oak tree. Huge oak tree back there. And after the storm, I, you know, go survey and sure enough, one of those trees snapped right in half.

[40:31] Half that tree is all over back there. And I was like, man, that was such a good tree. I thought for sure that was a strong tree. But as you look close at the tree, what you realize is that the whole core of that tree was just eaten up with ants.

And that's actually the problem with a lot of the trees back there is that they're just eaten up with ants. The ants have gotten in the core of that tree, eaten the core out. It wasn't the wind that destroyed that tree.

It was what was inside that was destroying that tree. There was something inside eating it from the inside so that when the wind came, the wind broke that tree in half and it was not the wind that was the main problem.

It was the heart of the tree. This is the issue with us. How we apply compassion in needs around us. And he uses the specific example of orphans and widows. And this is consistent through the whole Bible. How you deal with widows is actually going to be really important for you as a church because there is actually not just the general welfare of widows that you should be concerned about, but there is a specific category of widows that the church is actually responsible for.

[41:54] Those that have washed the feet of the saints. Those that have been faithful in service to the Lord. There's a whole category of them. Description for Timothy on what should happen in the church.

Our care. Our compassion. Because how we care for those widows who have served faithfully to the Lord tells everything about the heart of our church. Those that are hurting in our church. Those that are afflicted in our church. Say, ah. Because what James is doing is he's looking not just in your mouth, he's looking all the way down to your heart to visit orphans. He uses the word visit orphans. And you might get the wrong idea here. I think it's a beautiful thing for us to visit and go see and pat on the head or back and hug a kid that's in a bad situation. I think that's a good thing. But that's not what he's saying here. To visit them actually means to take some sense of ownership of their care.

[43:07] Like, it's very closely related to the word for overseer or elder of the church. Like, the elder of the church is an episkopos. Epi means above and skapos means to see.

An overseer. And we use the word in English more often super meaning above and visor to see supervisor. He's overseeing.

He's caring for. He's looking over the work of the church to make sure that it's done correctly. But in this case, he uses a different form of the word that you, as someone with living faith, ought to look at these situations where compassion is needed, specifically like widows and orphans, and you ought to take a sense of ownership in this.

You ought to actually care and actually get involved. I don't want to get involved in all that. I know. And therein lies the problem.

Because there's a heart issue. That's why we do vacation Bible school. I mean, some people don't know why we do those things. And sometimes it's just a ritual for a church you just do that.

[44:20] But the reality is we started those kinds of things as an outreach for kids that don't know Christ. Kids in difficult areas or kids in difficult times so that we could have a mechanism to reach out to them.

That's why we say when we do something like that, that's an all-hands-on-deck work. We go after these kids. We invite them to come. We love on them. We share the gospel with them. And hopefully, praise God, hopefully some of them will hear the gospel and be saved. Their lives will be changed forever because of the work that we get to do in their life. This is the care and oversight.

We're taking ownership of the oversight of their soul in a sense. Now, am I caring for the day-to-day thing? Sometimes I can do that. Sometimes I can't. But if there's any kids among us in our church that may be fatherless, may not have a complete family to care for them, I guarantee you, brothers and sisters in Christ, the compassion of this church ought to be shiny in that place.

We've got it. We ought to be looking for those opportunities to care, to visit and take ownership and help these single moms along the way.

[45:37] I was a child in a single parent home. I became a believer in Christ because... Because of a sixth-grade Sunday school teacher.

Because of a businessman that served in the church and reached out to us boys. And I didn't accept Christ immediately.

But the effect and the impact they had on my life later resonated to the point where when it came time to surrender my life to Jesus, I knew what it looked like.

Spurgeon said, charity and purity are the two garments of Christianity. I mean, you may not realize, like in some countries, the way they deal with orphan kids is different.

In Brazil, you may have read articles like I've read even more recently, just my eyes opened just to the peril of orphans in a place like Brazil because there are several articles you could look up on Google and you'll find that there was a period, especially in the 90s, when police officers were contracted to kill the vermin in the city.

[47:39] 400 kids a year in the... I can't remember the capital city there in Brazil. 400 kids a year killed by police officers to rid the streets of the vermin.

We don't have quite that yet in America, although we're importing that right now, apparently. But open your mouth.

Say, ah. He did not say true religion is making orphans mature and successful adults. He said, true religion is visiting orphans, results are God's business alone.

Obedience is ours by grace. More specifically, by faith in future grace. Perhaps when we grasp this, we will be freed from our earthbound way of thinking and be released to minister to those who are least likely to thank us.

Expressed faith. faith. In their distress. One commentator pointed out, he said, he said, we used to point out that there were three sorts of dogs in the city of London.

[49:11] The wild, masterless dog that roamed the streets at will, stole his meals from garbage pails and often came to an inglorious end in the lethal chamber of the humane society.

The chained dog, which could not be trusted for more than a few feet, and the dog that knew and loved his master and responded obediently to his voice.

The first of these had liberty but no law. The second had law but no liberty, whereas the last enjoyed the perfect law of liberty, living in obedience to the law of the Lord.

And I think this is for us. It's an issue of expression. Does my faith express itself in controlled speech and compassionate care?

And then finally, I can find my final point. anyone thinks he's religious does not bridle his tongue, deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless, religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions.

[50:42] Are you stained by the world? The things of the world, the characteristics of the world, the love of the world, the things the world loves, are those the things that you love or is your love guided by the wisdom of God?

The perfect law of liberty that frees you because you hear the voice of the Master and obey. You're not chained. You're actually free to obey because the Holy Spirit lives inside of you.

You've got the Spirit of the living God inside of you. And it is begging, in a sense, to express Himself. Not begging for your permission, but desiring deeply.

He's desiring deeply to express Himself. And the only reason that He doesn't express and we can resist. We resist His hand.

We resist His work. We resist His will. This is part of our sanctification. Growing in obedience. Is holiness a pursuit of your life?

[51:47] Unstained. I mean, clean. Pure. Undefiled. Do I stay away from those things? I'm asking myself this as I'm watching movies and thankfully we've got VidAngel that we use, you know, in our movies.

If you don't know what that is, it's like a filter. And it filters out the language. It filters out the sex scenes.