

The Implanted Word

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 September 2023

Preacher: Niels van de Kastele

[0 : 00] Starting in verse 12, we read, Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

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

[1 : 13] Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

This is the word of God. Great. Thanks so much, Zoe. And why don't we come to God in prayer? Our Father, thank you that we can come to you now, and we can give you thanks for the word of truth that can save our souls, that brought us forth, that met us your children.

[2 : 17] We pray that we would receive that word now with meekness. Please speak to us by your spirit. Work in each of our hearts, no matter where we are at, no matter what kind of weekend we've had. Please speak to our hearts today and encourage us with the good news of Jesus.

In his name we pray. Amen. Great. I don't know if you sometimes feel like God's word is not relevant to me. What they preach here on Sundays. I hope the word, Book of James has been actually pretty good, right?

So it's about, you know, what if life is messed up? What if things go wrong? What if things don't go your way? And so we have a typhoon, and we have this flooding, and I don't know what, yeah, what your weekend was like.

Maybe there was this really important thing you had to do at work, and you couldn't. Or you were stuck at home with your kids. Those kind of things. And, yeah, the Book of James addresses that. What do we do?

Because the problem is, we don't always respond well. I don't know how you spend your day. You know, I talked to someone who, oh, yeah, a lot of arguing, because we were just stuck up here at home.

[3 : 22] But, you know, it's just temporary, he said. It's okay. Or maybe, I don't know, maybe it's not that, maybe it's something slightly longer. What if your spouse is sick, or you are sick, and you're just in bed, and there's all this stuff you need to do, and how do you respond to that?

I know that I usually don't respond well. I don't know. My wife is sick, and so, well, what do the kids eat? Well, McDonald's and pizza, and go and watch TV, and it's only temporary, right?

That's what we only say, and it doesn't really matter. Ultimately, it's not that many consequences. But what if it drags on then? I don't know if you remember COVID. We never knew that COVID would take so long, right?

In the beginning of the pandemic, I thought, oh, I'll just need one mask, and that's enough. I was wrong. Right? But, you know, okay, two weeks at home, a bit of online learning, that should be okay, but it dragged on and on, and actually, now we can see some of the consequences, right? You can see little kids without immunity, or with speech problems, or who are socially awkward, because they've been locked up at home, right? But sometimes these things, things don't go wrong, and they have negative consequences.

[4 : 36] Now, what do we do with that? What do we do when, you know, work is so stressful, and, well, okay, I'm going to stop reading the Bible, and praying for a bit. Maybe I'm too busy for church. It's only temporary, right?

It's just for a season. It's okay. I'm going to drown my stress with Netflix, and unhealthy eating. You know, if it's only two weeks, it's okay, right?

What do we do with that? What if it's worse? Well, if you know, there's a real conflict in your family, but as a result of your busyness at work, but, you know, oh, well, it's only for a season.

This project will be finished soon, and I'm sure then we'll sort it out. The market's bad. Yeah, okay, well, I'm being very creative with my finances, but it'll soon be over, and then it's okay, right?

Pornography, yeah, my marriage is not very good, but soon we'll sort it out. We'll get some counseling, and no harm done, right? Well, that's the question. Does it have consequences?

[5 : 34] When things go wrong, and we respond in such a bad way, it seems so easy, right? Let's just take the easy way out. Let's take the easy solution, the thing that satisfies.

I mean, life is hard enough already, right? It's, you know, things are stressful, things are difficult. Let's take the easy way out. Well, what do we do with that?

Is that good? That's what we're talking about, because the book of James, as we've heard the past few weeks, is written to a bunch of religious refugees. People had to flee their hometown because of persecution, and now, of course, they've lost everything, and they need to get a new job, and a new life, and that's hard.

And if you read the letter, these guys were not responding well. I mean, most of us will know that, even if you're a visitor, right? When life goes wrong, sometimes it brings out the best in people, sometimes it brings out the worst in people, and with these guys, definitely, it was the worst.

And so, their pastor, James, he says, no, I want you to keep responding well. Use this as a chance to grow. You know, here are some truths. Come on, let's keep going.

[6 : 41] And today is basically the last week of, James's introduction, before we dive into specific topics, like favoritism, and the tongue, and some other things. And, I don't know, some of the passage we read last week as well, but there's so much in there that we need to look at it again.

Partly because, actually, it is one passage. So, I don't know if you notice that the passage starts and ends in the same way. Right? In verse 12, it says, blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

But, in verse 25, it says, the one who, the one who is, here you go, the one who perseveres, he will be blessed, and persevering, and steadfast.

It's kind of the same word. They're related, right? So, that's, you know, back then they didn't have paragraphs. So, hey, we need to take this together. You know, sometimes you read James, and it's all this random stuff. Actually, it's not random.

This is all one topic. How do we respond to trials? Yeah? How do we respond well? And if you endure, if you're steadfast, if you persevere, you will get the crown of life, right?

[7 : 47] Verse 12, the promised crown of life, this promised great future that we want. But, but, but so what? Yeah, yeah, okay, we want it.

But, you know, life is really hard right now. Does it matter if I don't know? Don't respond well. Well, and for that, we need to go back actually to, uh, these verses 12 to 18 to look at something we didn't have time for last week, because there's some imagery here.

That's actually really important because in here, what we see, what James wants us to know, there's two kinds of growth, two kinds of growth.

Now we look at first at 13 to 15, and that is kind of the, uh, the, the, the bad response, right? Verse 13, let no one say when he is tempted, tempted, I'm being tempted by God for God's cannot be

tempted with evil.

And he himself tempts no one, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. And this is the person who, uh, you know, it's all God's fault. Yeah. My life is, yeah, it's all going wrong, but it's not my fault.

[8 : 49] And so I've got an excuse to, to sin basically. Right. Uh, and James says, no, no, that's, that's not you. That's not, that's not God. That is, that's you. That's your heart. That's your desires.

But did you notice in the reading, uh, the imagery, because what happens in verse 15, then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Well, what do we hear? Conceive, give birth, uh, fully grown, bring forth, right? This is about procreation, reproduction, uh, making babies, right?

That's what it's about. It's about the growth of a baby. Uh, you add verse 14, right? Um, the, when he's lured and enticed by his own desires, yeah, someone being seduced and then, well, they sleep together and you get a baby.

I mean, these days we think it doesn't have any consequences, right? Because there's contraception. It's what we so often think about life. What we do, it doesn't have any consequences, but back then you sleep together, you get a baby and that baby will, grow.

[9 : 56] And that is the thing here, right? It's not a great picture because yeah, it gives birth to sin and sin will grow up and give, bring forth death, your death.

At the same time, look at the positive passage because after that, after looking at our hearts, Hey, he says, look at your father and how he gives every good gift. But then what does he say?

Every good gift and every perfect gift for 17 coming down from the father. Now, what is a father? It's someone who procreates, right? Usually James says God, but he says father. And what does he do?

Verse 18 of his own will. He brought us forth at the same word by the word of truth. That should, we should be a kind of first fruits of his creation of his creatures. So it's about bringing forth verse 21, receive with meekness, the implanted words, right?

The egg that kind of gets implanted in the womb, that kind of imagery here. And so in, in both passages, the, the, the good, the bad and the good, there is, there is growth.

[10 : 59] And so that, yeah, the positive, the positive here is being a child of God. Now, I know what we say, we're watermark, right? That being a child of God is, we're no longer orphans, right?

We, God has adopted us and, you know, we used to be able to have to survive on our own and it's so difficult, but now God has made us his children and we have the status of being his children is wonderful, but this is something else.

This is about growing, right? This is about the word of truth implanting in you and changing you.

God doesn't want you to have the status just of being children, but he wants you to almost have his DNA that you resemble him, that you become more and more like Jesus, like his son, right?

Isn't that a wonderful thing? And the life of God growing in you, I mean, most of us, we are not happy with who we are, right? But God wants us to make us better. He wants to grow us.

But the thing is, so in both passages, there is growth. And the question is, yeah, which growth do you want? There's always growth. When things go wrong in your life, something's going to grow.

[12 : 05] But what is going to grow? Is it sin that's going to grow in you? Or is it the life of God that's going to grow in you? It's one of the two. And there's no neutrality. Which one do you want?

And because I so often think that when I don't grow in holiness, I'm standing still, right? Yeah, normally I grow spiritually, but now my life is a mess. So I'm just neutral. I've just pressed pause, right?

And when things are better, then I'll press play again and things will go well. Actually, James says, that's not the case. When you're not growing better, you're growing worse, right?

There's sin growing in you. Every time you sin, every time you give in to sin, you're making things worse. And it's not a pretty picture. I mean, I put there a picture of a pregnant woman expecting a cute baby, and we've seen lots of cute babies.

But this is probably something else, right? Have any of you, I know this movie came out before most of you were born, but Alien? I don't know if any of you have seen this movie.

[13 : 07] It's a classic. And you probably know which scene I'm thinking about with John Hurt. You know, next time you think of sin growing in you, think of that scene, okay?

That's terrible. Or maybe, if you don't know, think of a tapeworm, right? A little parasite that grows and grows and becomes this, right? And your intestines think of cancer, something evil growing inside you.

That is, you know, you don't want that, right? The thing is, we are so often deceived, right? He keeps on saying, don't be deceived, don't be deceived.

I mean, the thing is, you don't see it grow, right? And actually, growth is very slow. That's the thing with childbirth. It's very, very slow, right? After conception, it takes nine months for the birth. And then before they're fully grown, that's a long time later, right? I mean, it says here, when sin is fully grown, it brings forth death. So death is like the grandchild.

[14:07] Now, that's a long time away, right? Any of the parents here, are you thinking about grandkids? No, right? That's so long. But that's the thing, right? Sin is growing very, very slowly.

But slowly, but surely. That's why we are so deceived and think our sin doesn't matter. It does. At the same time, that's the problem with the positive, right?

You know, are we growing in holiness? The problem is we often don't see it because children grow so slowly. I hardly notice my own kids growing. It's only when kind of you see people after a while, oh, your kids have really grown.

You just don't notice it. And so the fact that you are growing more and more as a child of God, yeah, you don't really see it. You don't notice it. And so maybe you're discouraged because you don't see much happening.

Well, actually it is because God's work is, it's just slow and steady. But which growth that's up to us, that depends on how you are going to respond to the things going wrong in your life.

[15:06] Are you going to respond well? Or are you going to respond badly? And I hope if we see this, if we, if we have this picture in our minds that we want to respond well. So what should we do then?

Well, that's the second half of the passage. And the step one, I guess is obvious. Well, turn from sin, right? Turn away. Verse 19. And know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness. It's interesting how we turn straight to relationships, right?

Where do we see the stress, everything? We see it in conflict, right? So much arguing with others and you're, you're stressed and you take it out on others and, you know, you want something and you don't get it.

And so you fight, right? We see that, but instead, you know, don't speak, don't get angry, be quick to hear, listen, don't take it out on others, right?

[16:06] I can see this in myself. It's so easy to speak. It's so easy to, to think you're right, right? I love verse 20. The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. I want something.

And, uh, you know, my wife disagrees and I'm, I'm so sure I'm right. And I think about it and I get more angry and I feel more right. And that keeps going. I'm not getting more righteous.

I'm just getting more and more bitter. And that is really doing damage to my heart. Isn't it? If I respond like that. Now, uh, take time to listen and, and, and turn, turn away from this anger, turn away from this desire to just speak and be right.

Uh, in general, just, just get rid, right? Verse 21, uh, take away all filthiness and rampant wickedness. I don't know how you respond to trials, maybe in a very bad way. Maybe, well, you feel, okay, I can sin.

My life is just a mess. It's really bad for you, right? It's like, yeah, think of this parasite. Don't excuse sin because of stress. Don't think it's just a season.

[17:09] Stop it. And, and how do you stop something? I think, well, you need to starve it, right? That's what many of us think with sin, with doing something bad. If I just do something, then it will go away. Like a dog right here.

You give it some food, it will go away. It doesn't work like that. It will just keep coming back. Let's starve it. You need to starve it if you want to stop the growth. Now, the thing is, we don't often talk about that because we don't want to say kind of stop sinning because that feels so legalistic, right? We're a gospel centered church. We're a gospel centered church. Maybe as a, if you're here as a visitor, you wonder, we keep talking about the gospel and gospel centered. I do want to say that because, yeah, the gospel is the good news of Jesus.

I mean, what are we all about? The fact that Jesus came to die for what we've done wrong, right? God made us and he, you know, he, he, yeah, we belong to him, but we've turned away. We've all lived our own way. And how do you get back to him? And, and every religion says, oh yeah, just, you know, be good and do more good and bad. And then God will have you. Of course, the problem is, well, one, everything good, I should have already done anyway.

[18:15] So why would it merit me anything? And second, if I really look at my insight with my faults and my words, which God sees, no way I'm going to do more good things than bad things, right?

No, because of God's love, he sent his son and he paid for everything we've done wrong. And now we can just come back to God forgiven and accepted without any kind of trying to be good enough. And we, we have that freedom and it's wonderful. And that good news changes everything. That's what we celebrate here. And if you don't know it, come and talk to me. We, we, that's what we're all about.

But the only thing is when you say that it's so easy to think, well, sin doesn't matter, right? Because Jesus has paid for everything. It doesn't matter. Right? And, and in some ways, yeah, it doesn't. It's not like I'm a child of God, but I do something wrong and I'm no longer a child of God and I need to get back to him. I mean, I have kids just because they are rude. One time to me, that doesn't mean that they're still being my children.

[19:12] No, right? They, they, they stay my kids and we stay God's children, but that doesn't mean that sin doesn't do damage to your heart. It doesn't mean that it's not growing something inside you, that it hardens you, that if you just give into sin because life is difficult, that it won't, you know, turn you away from God, that it won't grow inside you.

I think that that's the danger, right? Because we think Jesus paid it all, that actually sin is harmless, that it doesn't do anything. No. And even though, yeah, that's, yeah, I hope it's clear, right?

I mean, come and talk to me. But don't make peace with sin because it will not make peace with you. I think it was John Owen, right? Who said to be killing sin or otherwise sin will kill you.

It's one of the two. But, but what then? What then? What if we turn from sin? Now, my guess is most of us will think, okay, I stopped doing bad things and I start doing good things. Actually, that's not where James goes, right?

Because where does he first go? Well, turn to the words, right? End of verse 21. Receive with meekness the implanted words, which is able to save your souls.

[20:22] Right? We, we turn to the words and receiving. I mean, later he will talk about listening, but because why do we need the words? Well, it says it's implanted. It's the, the word that is at work in us.

The thing is by ourselves, we can never become like this, right? We can never just turn and with our own goodness, you know, become what we should be. We need God's grace.

We need God to work in us. God's spirit, God's power, God's love through that gospel that came to us, that word that is kind of inside us. And of course, that's connected to the word here, right?

As we work, as we read the word here, it kind of, yeah, it works in us by the same spirit who wrote this, who now speaks to our hearts now. And if, yeah, we can't just do it, but we need the word.

We need God's power. And so, yeah, turn to the words. And last week, we saw these great truths that we just really need, but where do you find those words? In the word, right?

[21:19] So I'm glad you're here, but you know, one morning is not enough to keep me on the good path. And so, you know, go to your community groups, read the Bible daily, those kinds of things.

We need the word, right? We need, it's not a duty, but it's just something that is our life, right? Our bread that feeds us, our, the power that comes inside us and changes us.

And with humility, with meekness, come to the words. But of course, don't just hear it. Then the third one, of course, do it, right? this famous passage, verse 22, but be doers of the words and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

And that seems the problem with them. They, they were hearers, but not doers. They were pretty proud of themselves because we're hearing the word, but they weren't actually doing anything. And if you think you, you know, that's enough.

If you think that that is a change, then while you're deceiving yourself, and he's gives this great illustration, uh, verse 23, right? For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man

who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror for, he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

[22 : 32] And the man who looks in the mirror and then just turns away and completely forgets. Now, people aren't fully sure what it means. The problem is that we think of modern mirrors, right? And so you see the mirror and you look at yourself and you can see, oh man, I need a haircut and what's this stain and okay, I need to lose some weight, right? And it would be stupid to then not do something about it.

The only thing is mirrors back then, they weren't very good. Uh, in one Corinthians, Paul says, you know, now we can hardly see Jesus. It's like in a mirror, but then we see face to face. I think mirrors back then, it's more like a Tesla kind of that you walk past.

You walk past the car, you see a vague reflection and, uh, well, that doesn't mean very much, right? You, you walk on the street, you see your reflection quite a few times, but it's, it's, it's pointless. It doesn't change your life because it doesn't help you by contrast. On the other hand, because that's the point, right? The word is different. The word is well, the, the perfect law, right?

[23 : 32] The one who looks into the perfect law. God's word is flawless. It shows everything about us. It shows us everything about God, about the world. It's perfect. It is the, the, the, the word that we need.

You mean the word that gave you birth, the word that can save you. You wouldn't ignore that, right? That's something pointless. That is something that, that you need. So, uh, read it and, and do it, right?

And, and especially do it when it's hard. That's the thing about training, training only. You need, you need to push through, right? If you stop exercising, when you get tired, you never get better.

And you never get more holy. If you stop obeying when it's, if you only obey when it's easy, right?

Now, you make progress when you keep going, when you persevere, when it's hard.

I don't know what it's going to look like. Maybe to, on Monday, probably it will be a mess, right?

Because there was this work you wanted to do on Friday and, uh, you couldn't get that done.

[24 : 29] And now you're stressed and you had a bad weekend with your, uh, at home. How are you going to act? Are you going to take it out to your colleagues? Are you going to be resentful? Are you going to be edgy?

That's not going to be good for you, right? So you want to turn away from that. And so instead what you do, yeah, you turn to the word, right? In the morning and you read Psalm 139 and God, he's planned every detail, including that flooding, you know?

And he, you read Matthew six, don't, we just said it, don't be anxious. Your father knows what you need, right? He'll take care of that. He'll take care of the deadline. We don't need to sin to, you know, uh, to, to follow, uh, to follow God, to, to do what we need to do.

And maybe you read about compassion. You know, your colleagues, they probably also had a bad weekend, right? Maybe their house got flooded more than yours. Maybe it's not the best time to get angry with them.

And maybe I should just treat them with compassion. And, and so you see God, you know, you pray for wisdom and patience and self-control. Uh, Lord, help me to be compassionate like you and understanding like a father who doesn't find fault.

[25 : 34] Uh, you know, help me to grow, to be more like your child through this. Help me to make me more like Jesus. You know, that's, that's, that's how you respond. And you go into your day and go into your work with grace, with love, with patience, and, and that will grow you.

That's kind of the idea, right? And we, we turn away from what we want to do and we seek the word and, and then we, okay, we're trying to be like Jesus. And that's wonderful.

But that's a struggle. It's struggle because it's usually hard, right? It's so easy to do things when it's easy. It's so easy to love your spouse when they are lovely.

It's harder to love them when they're not lovely. It's great to obey your boss when he's really great, but if he's difficult, we find it hard, right? And it's easy to trust God when life is stable and secure and you're feeling blessed.

It's much harder to trust him when things are going wrong, but we need to persevere, right? Even when things are tough, when you think you're tough enough, when you're busy enough just to survive.

[26 : 35] I know it can feel like a burden, right? James knows that. God knows that. Okay. Following God when it's tough, that's feels like a burden, a law. It's so easy to just give in to your desires, right?

Just give in to your sin. Look again, what James calls it. God knows this. Look into the perfect law, the law of liberty.

Now he doesn't mean the old Testament. He means the gospel. He means Jesus teaching, you know, God's teaching, the word, it brings freedom. Now you think that giving into your sin is, feels free.

I hope you see that you're not free, right? Because you're being enticed by your sinful desires and lured away. You're not free. Now remember, you are free because you were a child of God, right? Jesus has taken care of everything. God has accepted you. He's adopted you. And now you can just, you're free to be who you are. That is Christian freedom, right?

[27 : 33] It's not freedom to do whatever we want, but freedom to be who we really are. Freedom to be who God has made us. Freedom to try to be like God. And we don't have to worry about, are we meeting a standard?

Because God has already met a standard for us in his son, Jesus. We can just live it. And isn't that what you want? That's what God wants for you. He wants you to live in freedom, to live and, and grow to be like him.

And surely that's what we want as well. So yeah, let's, let's remember this passage. Let's remember, you know, next trial, next temptation. Remember the picture of sin here.

And then remember this, I, the words, the life of God growing in you and, and turn to that. And then let's live it out. And let's see God work. Let's see God strengthen you, grow you, establish you and, and do a miracle.

Why don't we, you know, why don't we reflect for a moment? I've got a few questions here. Just, you know, maybe there's things that we need to repent of. Maybe, yeah, things have been hard and you have been responding with sin.

[28 : 37] And you realize that, uh, that's been hurting you. Why don't you bring that to the Lord and repent, but also, yeah, think about the goodness here.

Think about the gospel and, uh, yeah, and, and, and let that massage your heart. Okay. So let's take a minute to reflect and then I'll pray. And then we're going to respond in some worship.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Father, we, we see the, the two ways here. And, uh, we confess that sometimes we, we haven't responded. Well, we bring that to you and we thank you that, uh, yeah, your love for us doesn't change.

[30 : 21] That it doesn't mean that you need to get back to you, but we are secure in your love.

And yet we want to turn away from the things that harm us. Help us to turn away. Help us to turn to you by your grace, by your power, work in us, grow in us that life, that words, that we become more like your son, Jesus, who we see in this word, that we be more and more, your children, more and more like you, the beautiful people that you want us to be.

Jesus name. We pray. Amen.