

James #5 - Know The Word, Do The Word

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- So how many of you loved riding your bike when you were a kid, loved, loved, loved riding your bike? Let's hear it for the bike. Let's just do a little moment of tribute. Thank you Lord for the bike. I really loved my bike when I was a kid 'cause you could go almost anywhere. You could go almost anywhere if you were committed to pedaling. And so I'd go to my friend's house, go to the pool, go to the park, go to ball practice, go hang out with my friends. And there was one day I can still remember, I was a little kid, probably too far away from home, a little further than my parents gave me permission, and I'm pedaling and clunk, the pedal came off the bike. And I thought, well, I'll fix it. No tools. So, you know, as a kid does, you try and put it back on. I fixed it. And then you jump on, you pedal, what happens? Clunk, didn't really fix it. You're a kid, you didn't have any tools. So I'm thinking, okay, what do I do now? So I put the pedal in my pocket. I'm trying figure out, how do I get home? I actually got a long ways to go. I know what I'll do. Easy, easy. Oh, I'll just use one pedal and I'll ride home with one pedal. And so I'm kinda, you could tell it didn't go well, right? I mean, I can't even revisit that moment without falling off the stage. So in your mind's eye, just think of me trying to pedal How many of you kids tried to pedal with one pedal? You ever tried that? How'd it go? Congratulations, you lived through it. That was a miracle, okay. It's impossible to ride a bike with one, you don't go anywhere, you can't make any progress. As we jump into James, chapter one, verses 19 through 27, here's what I want you to think of as we go through this whole section of scripture. The Christian life is like that. It's like that. It's like two pedals on a bike. Know the Word, do the Word, know the Word, do the Word, know the Word, do the Word. Know the Word, do the Word. Some of you are know the Word, know the Word, know the Word, know the Word people. You read books, you got footnotes, you're totally nerdy. Right now you're probably double-checking everything I'm saying on the internet to see if it's true. Know the Word, know the Word, know the Word, know- And some of you are, do the Word, do the Word, real practical, real faithful, real consistent. You don't like books 'cause you already got done with school. Okay, so know the Word, do the Word, know the Word, do the Word. I know you love the illustration, you're welcome. Just keep it in your mind's eye for the rest of the sermon. And he's going to teach us that we need to know the Word of God and do the Word of God. And here's where James learned this. He learned it from his big Jesus. If you're new, James is a pastor at this point he's a grown older man. But growing up his big brother was Jesus Christ. And they would have sat together in synagogue, their equivalent of church every week, hearing the lesson, taking notes, talking about it on the way home, as they're walking back to their mom and dad's place. Jesus,

what did you learn? James, what did you learn? What are we gonna do? How can we pray for each other? What does this mean for our week? These are guys who probably shared a bedroom together growing up. They would have sat at the dinner table, praying, talking, in addition to the rest of the family. They went to school together. So James watched his big brother, Jesus, grow to know the Word of God and then do the Word of God. He even heard Jesus say this very thing. We know that Jesus said it in Luke 11:28, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who know the Word of God and do it." So from Jesus' works, how he lived his life and his Words, the things that he taught, James learned what to do with this book, the most important book written in the history of the world. This is the Word of God. That's what it claims repeatedly. And this is so incredibly important because we live in a world that is filled with words about God: philosophy, religion, speculation of various sorts and kinds. Some of it is truthful and helpful and much of it, quite frankly, is not. This is not a word about God. This is the Word of God. And this most important Word of God, it is most important for us to determine, what do we do with this? What do we do with this Word of God? And following in Jesus' example and instruction, James says, know it and do it, know it and do it. And so we jump to James chapter one, verse 19, where he begins with his exhortation, that we know the Word. So here's how he begins. "Know this my beloved brothers," that's the Christians, the men and the women positionally are brothers in Christ. They're beloved. They have an inheritance. They carry the family name and legacy. "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 and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls." He starts with this. Know this, know this! He's trying to grab your attention. He's trying to grab our mind and to open it up to receive this amazing truth from God. Know this, don't forget this, 'cause here's what can happen. He's gonna give us a list of things to do and not do and we can rush right into the to-do list. And he's saying, don't do that just yet. We'll get to what you should do and not do, but first there's something you need to know. So he says, "Know this, my beloved." It all starts with the love of God. Receive this. Sit in it for a moment. You are God's beloved. You're God's beloved. If you're a Christian you're God's beloved. My wife's here, she's my beloved. God loves you like that. My kids are here, they're my beloved. God loves you like that. God loves you, the Bible says, like a husband loves his wife, like a father loves his kids. God loves you. This establishes your identity. And out of your identity comes your activity. Before he tells you what to do, he tells you who you are. It's very important to get that right. The result is that we're, that when we obey God, when we do what God tells us to do, we're not working for the love of God, we're working from the love of God. This is the difference between Christianity and other false religions. It begins with the love of God. God can't love you anymore, and no matter what you do, God won't love you any less. And this changes our obedience. Imagine if I had this conversation with one of my children, I don't love you, but I might. It all depends on how you perform. I'm going to give you a list of things to do and not do. If I find that you have obeyed them, then I might love you, but it's all predicated on your performance. That's not how God thinks. That's not how God feels. That's not what God says. God says, I love you. And my love for you is not predicated on anything that you do. It's predicated on who I am. You can't earn it. And because you can't earn it you can't un-earn it and lose it. I am devoted to you. I am committed to you. I am affectionate toward you. I only want good for you. You're my

beloved. It would be like me looking at one of my children saying, you need to work for my love! That's horrific. And parents never do that. Instead, it's the father saying, you can work from my love. Because I love you, I need you to listen to me. I need you to trust that what I am telling you is for your good. So he starts with, beloved, know this! Your beloved. His love is a gift, and then he speaks of a second gift that God wants to give us and we need to receive. And it's the Word of God. So it's the love of God and the Word of God. He starts with these two gifts. And he talks of the Word of God, the implanted Word which is able to save your souls. Now how many of you are gardeners? Right, how many of you are excited that pretty soon you'll be able to take seeds and place them in the ground, and then they can be watered and nourished, and eventually they'll spring to life, and something beautiful will come into existence, something fruitful will happen. God is like a gardener. God wants to take his Word and he wants to plant it in your soul so that there could be life and fruit that proceeds out of your relationship with him. And so what he's telling us is that the Word of God has power for life within it. One of the most amazing things, particularly when you're a kid, how many of you when you were a kid and you were in school they'd give you a little cup, they put dirt in it, they'd say, okay, put a seed in it, water it every day, and put it over by the windowsill and see what happens? And how many of you would show up to school and you'd run over to the windowsill and you'd look at the cup? It's budding, it's growing, it's happening. God says, I wanna do that in your soul with my Word. And I have that kind of excitement for this process that I wanna take you through. I wanna take my perfect, eternal, life-giving Word, and I wanna plant in your soul, right in the center of your life, your existence, your identity, and then you're going to grow. You're going to be fruitful and your life is going to change by the power of my love and the power of my Word. And that's good news, amen. So as we hear this, and then God says, so do this and don't do that. He starts with, know this, my love is a gift, my word is a gift. We're going to do something together that is wonderful and your life is going to change. But there are five ways that we can resist this, we can fight this, we can oppose this. Some of you will call it your personality. All right, right, right. I'm a J-E-R-K. I took a test and I'm, you know, it's my personality. They're an ENTP, I'm a J-E-R-K. That's just, you know, it's my, this is the way I am. This is my personality. Sometimes God wants us to repent of our personality. All right? These are types of people. These are personalities that they're not willing to receive the implanted Word of God fully, and as a result, they don't grow as fast as they should, and they can't produce as much fruit as they're able. The first is the chatterbox. Okay, do you know what a chatterbox is? I think I do. I don't know. Maybe I am, maybe I'm not. I think I'm a verbal processor, does that count as a, yes, you're a chatterbox, okay? This is a person who, they talk a lot, too much. And so we say, you're preaching, aren't you a hypocrite? Yes, but overlook that, moving right along. The chatterbox is the one that always has to talk and fill in the air, and can't just let things be, and always needs to get the last word, and make sure that you get their input, and their voice needs to be considered, and oh, I need to tell you what I think about this, and they've always gotta say something. What he says to, are you a chatterbox? If you're not sure, your spouse will help you clarify. What does he say to the chatterbox? You need to learn to be slow to speak, slow to speak. The Rabbis used to say, "God gave us two ears and one mouth because we're supposed to listen twice as much as we speak." The second personality is the bad listener. Are you a bad listener? I'll say it again, okay. Are you a bad listener? A bad listener is sometimes a person

who's distracted, and there's so much going on in their mind, and they're so frazzled and frantic they're not listening. But sometimes they hear and they just don't like it. It might be true, but they just don't like it. A bad listener. What does he say to the bad listener? We need to learn to be quick to hear. Some of you have been told, you don't listen. You're like, what? You don't listen! Huh? Some of you, you've gotten information, you've gotten truth, maybe even it's God's Word, you just don't listen to it. Either you don't hear it, or you don't ponder it, you don't consider it, you don't receive it, you don't plant it. What you don't need is more information. You need more receptivity. Number three. Some of you are the person with the short fuse. You heard that? Oh they've got a very short fuse. This is someone who is prone to anger. Now out of these five, there will be at least one that is most convicting for you. This is the one that's most convicting for me. And if you're a person who can get angry, as I can, immediately maybe, if you're like me, you'll get theological. You're like, well, God gets angry. It's one of God's emotions. It's not a sin. Yeah, and? God doesn't get angry like we do. The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. He's talking about a difference between the way that we are prone to get angry and the way that God gets angry, and those tend to be different. The verse of the Bible that is quoted in the rest of the Bible, more than any verse in the Bible is Exodus chapter 34, verse six. Have you ever wondered that? Why out of all the verses in the Bible, which verse do the other authors, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, remember and go back and quote all the time? What's the most popular verse in the whole Bible? That would probably be a very important verse. Exodus 34:6, and God says, he's "The Lord, the Lord." Hear this, "slow to anger." It doesn't say, who never gets angry, 'cause at the end of the section in Exodus 34, he says, and I don't leave the guilty unpunished. What God is saying is, I do have a wick, but it's not a short wick that burns fast. It's a long wick that burns slow. God's not always teetering on the edge of anger, just leaning into it, just waiting to be pushed over that line. Some of you live there. You're angry. One person, one thing, it sets you off. It pushes you over the line. You're raging, you're angry, you're frustrated, you're steaming. The people that are around you, they're always on guard. They feel like they are in the presence of a grenade with the pin pulled, right? The slightest bop and an explosion will occur. What does he say to those with a short fuse? We are to learn to be slow to anger. Number four, the compromiser. The compromiser's the person who, they can't stand this sin but they can stand that sin. That's nasty, I hate it. That's nasty, I kinda like it. They're inconsistent. We might call them hypocritical. These are people who will not submit their whole life to the Lord, instead they will segment their life to the Lord. And this part, I'm gonna keep that in order, and this part, well, I kind of enjoy that, nobody's perfect. I read something about not judging, good enough. What he says is, therefore put away how much filthiness and rampant wickedness, how much? All, all. He's saying, don't segment your life, surrender your life. Don't clean up part of your life and allow rampant sin and wickedness in another part of your life. And the compromiser is willing to live with this incongruity, this hypocrisy. Now what he is saying is that that those need to get rid of all filthiness and rampant wickedness. And then it gives us the fifth category, the know-it-all. The know-it-all is the person that you can't teach them anything because they already know everything. As soon as you start teaching them something they interrupt you, oh, I know, do, do, do, do. And then they, they tell you all that they know. They like to be the authority. They like to get the last word. They like to make sure you know how smart they are and all that they understand and they're inside, and

I've thought of that, and thank you. And you know, very nice of you to use your small brain to try and contribute, but unnecessary. Right? The know-it-all. And the problem with the know-it-all is they're proud. They're not humble. As a result, they don't receive instruction. They reject instruction. For those who are the know-it-all he says, receive with meekness, humility there. Lord, I am not as smart as you. Lord, I have things to learn. Lord, there are ways I need to change. Lord, I want to be teachable. For those who are the know-it-all, it's really a proud heart that's unwilling to receive a good gift, like the Word of God. So which one are you, right? The chatterbox, the bad listener, the short fuse, the compromiser, the know-it-all? And so you're like, I don't know, I'm two or three. They're not mutually exclusive, okay? You can have the great capacity of ticking more than one box. Okay, we all can. And so the first thing he's saying is you need to know the Word. You need to know the Word of God. I would ask you how well do you know the Word of God, and what aspect of your personality and proclivity might be hindering, resisting, fighting this great gift of God planting his Word in your life to cause fruitfulness to come forth? And he's going to transition from know the Word to do the Word, because it's not just enough to know the Word we have to do the Word. Otherwise we end up like this, so I'll give you an analogy. Imagine a dad who gets up early in the morning before the kids go to school, and he realizes, man, the garbage cans in the house are all full. The trash in the kitchen is overflowing, goes outside, golly, the garbage can's full, oh and it's trash pickup day. I need my kids to take the garbage out. So dad goes back in, writes a long letter and he starts, I love you, your kids know I love you. You're the best kids in the world. I wouldn't trade you for anybody. Remember I gave you ice cream for dessert last night and I'll give you a hug when I get home It starts with a lot of love before it gets into the do and don't do. It is trash pickup day. The house stinks. It's a total wreck. I need your kids to take all the trash out of the bins in the house. Take 'em out to the big garbage can. Drag it out to the curb because the trash truck is coming. It's garbage pickup day. I really need you to do this before you go to school. Love, Dad. Kids get up, read the letter. Go to school, come home, Dad comes home from work. There's no garbage can out on the curb, drives up, garbage can's overflowing. Goes in the house, trash, everywhere. Nobody cleaned out a garbage can, Family meeting. Hey kids, sit on the couch. We're gonna talk about this. Did you kids get my letter? Yeah, dad, it was amazing. The prose was fantastic. The imagery was astounding, and the punctuation was perfect. All the verbs were in the right tense. Dad, you're a very good writer. And we really got the heart behind the letter because you were so loving toward us. So yeah, dad, we took it very, we skipped school. We spent the whole day studying the letter. We never really thought about trash like this. We started researching how other nations dispose of their trash. And it got us into other fields of study, carbon footprint, recycling. It really got us thinking how we could study trash taking out in a gospel centered way. So we actually, dad, we brought some friends over. We spent the whole day going through the scriptures examining this issue of trash because we frankly overlooked it until recently. And what we found is that this is a theme in the whole Bible, Dad. We found in the Old Testament, that they would take their trash outside of the city. And that trash was like symbolic of sin and it needs to be away. Dad, we learned that they would take it to a place called Gehenna, and they would set it on fire to burn it. And that was imagery for hell. It was amazing, Dad, we didn't know this. And then we looked at the New Testament. First we did Old Testament, Hebrew Word studies on trash. And then we did New Testament Greek Word studies on trash, Dad, with all of

our friends. We had a small group and we found that the language of trash is used in the New Testament. Like did you know in Philippians, Paul says that all religion is like trash. That was shocking to us. So we started a website. We've actually launched a ministry where we're trying to educate people about the theology of trash. Dad's question would be, Did ya, did ya take the trash out? Doh, sorry, Dad. We were too busy doing Word studies in small groups on trash, okay. The church is like that, amen. Amen? All right, I've seen guys, like, I know what the Greek word for love your wife is, why she so miserable? We can turn Christianity into an academic exercise instead of a lifestyle, into something that we study rather than someone we become. We can use the Bible for information instead of transformation. Now am I saying that study's bad? Okay, how many of you are like, he said book learning's awful. I love that church. No, did I say that? I talked to a guy, he was a cage fighter, some years ago, I handed him one of my books, okay. I said, "Hey, I brought you one of my books." He's like, "I don't need that. I already graduated from college." His view was, hey man, you don't read unless they make you, okay. How many of you were like that? You're like, I don't wanna study. I don't like to study. If you preach the anti-study sermon, yes. I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that studying is bad. I'm saying that studying alone is bad. I'm saying that only studying is bad. Otherwise you could be like the guy, my wife's favorite color is blue, and her favorite flowers are tulips, and she loves to go to Thai food for date night. And I never bought her anything blue. And I never bought her tulips. And I've never eaten Thai food with her. It's good that you know those things and it's bad if you don't do something with what you know. So James' frustration is he's got a bunch of religious people. He's pastoring a big church in Jerusalem. He's a grown man. He's been doing it a while. He's been teaching these people and they have a lot of knowledge. They know a lot, but they're not doing a lot. And he's very frustrated because his big brother, Jesus, wasn't like that. Jesus didn't just hold up in some academic institution just to study all day, he worked a job as a carpenter. He started a ministry. He fed people. He healed people. He taught people. He prayed for people. He served people. He rebuked people. He encouraged people. He went to the cross, he died. Jesus got stuff done. He did study and he got stuff done. And Christianity is the Christian following in the steps of Christ. Know the Word of God, do the Word of God. And it's not that know the Word of God is bad, and do the Word of God is good, it's that knowing the Word of God without doing the Word of God is bad. Doing the Word of God without growing in your knowledge of the Word of God is bad. And what is good is both knowing and doing the Word of God, the two pedals on the bike. So then he transitions to know the Word. To do the Word, James 1:22 through 27, but, but be what? Doers, okay. So be like, I know the Greek Word for that. Okay, then you really need this section in a big way. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only. There's the issue. Deceiving yourselves. There's a word of caution. "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, before he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like." It continues. "But the one who looks into the perfect law," the law of liberty, the scriptures, "and perseveres," keeps going, "being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing." God wants to bless you. And the blessing comes with knowing and doing the Word of God, not either or both, and. If anyone thinks he's religious, I'm pretty mature, I've been a Christian for a while. I know a few things. Made some progress. "And does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart. This person's religion is", what? "Worthless." Religion that is pure and

undefiled before God you may find it fine, but God does not, whatever it is you believe or how you behave. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, he's your Dad who loves you and has this gift of his Word for you is this, "to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world." Those of you who have been Christian a while, those of you who have been under biblical teaching, those of you who have heard a few podcasts, read a few books, maybe even been to a few conferences, you're vulnerable. You're vulnerable to the trap of false religion. We're vulnerable to the trap of false religion. I'll put myself in that. It's going to juxtapose true religion and false religion. When the Bible speaks of religion it usually does so negatively but here he's going to redeem it in a positive way. He's gonna warn us about false religion and he's going to encourage us toward true religion. And he says that false religion is marked by two things, self deception and forgetfulness. Self-deception is where you think that because you know a lot, you've changed. Self-deception is where like Paul says to the Corinthians, knowledge puffs up. I'm pretty smart. I've read a few books. I understand some theology. These other people don't know the things that I know. They can't quote the things I can quote. Knowledge all by itself puffs up, its pride. And it can lead to self deception. I should be a teacher. I should be a leader. I'm ahead of them. I'm better than them. I know more than them. I should rebuke them. I should correct them. Why, because I'm above them. Self deception. And what you're overlooking is religious pride which is among the worst sins of all. Now here's the problem with self-deception. You don't know that you're self deceived. When you have deceived yourself you are not the best person to diagnose your self deception. This is where if you read alone, if you study alone, and you're not in community you're more vulnerable to self deception. Because there's no one to disagree with you. There's no one to correct you. There's no one to examine you. There's no one to help investigate your heart and motive. Are you being humble or proud? This is why on Sunday It tends to be know the Word day. I get to teach you the Bible and I really appreciate that. But community group for us is do the Word time. And it's guarding against self deception by inviting others to help us evaluate what we believe and how we behave. Because we live in a day where there is so much information there is an increase in self deception Because you can know a lot, but apart from community, it can result in religious pride, puffing up, and self deception. So he says that that we need to be on guard against this, aware of this, and concerned about this. And let me tell you this. I think this may be Satan's issue. I don't wanna present this as a fact, but as something that I've considered. I've wondered over time, Satan has the same access to the same scriptures that you and I do. And it's very clear that in the end God wins and Satan loses. It's very clear, yet Satan persists and he consistently moves forward in his rebellion against God. He continues this war, this battle, this fight against God even though it's really clear that he's gonna lose. And I've always wondered, why? Why does he march forward in his rebellion when he knows the end? And here's the thing. I think he self deceived. I think he believes that he is right and God is wrong. And that he will win and God will lose. And the end will not be the way God has decreed. And people live like that all the time. I won't reap what I sow, I don't need Jesus. I won't go to hell. They know what it says and they've deceive themselves into thinking that they are right and God is wrong. And I believe this is satanic. I believe this is demonic. False religion is marked by self-deception and forgetfulness. And he uses the analogy of a mirror. How many of you, at some point today, looked in the mirror, right? You think of all the mirrors we've got in our life. You've got one in your

bathroom, probably got some in your home. You got one in your car, right? Some of you carry a mirror with you, ladies, if you do and you're a guy, okay, you're... Right. He's using this analogy. He says a religious view of scripture is like someone who looks into a mirror and then walks away and forgets who they are, forgets what they saw. It would be like this morning, I got up, I looked in the mirror, I walked away and somebody said, tell me about yourself. Well, I have long blonde hair and I'm clean shaven and I have a petite neck. It'd be like, strike three. Don't laugh, hey. For some of us, looking in the mirror is not the high point of the day, all right? There's an old guy there who resembles me and I don't know who that is. But it would be really weird for someone to look in the mirror and walk away and completely forget what they just experienced. But he says, we do this with the Word of God all the time. You open the Bible, you're like, okay, it's like a mirror. Okay, I see myself in God's eyes. I see my sin, my need for Jesus, my areas to learn, and to change, and to grow, and what God is doing. Okay, I got it. I understand, it makes sense to me. Okay, put my Bible down, walked away, what did it say? I don't know, I forgot. I forgot what God said. I forgot what God showed me about myself. Just like the mirror shows us something about ourself, God's Word shows us something even deeper about ourselves, not just the expression on our face but the condition of our heart. That's false religion. It's marked by self deception and forgetfulness. And then he juxtaposes that with true religion. He says that true religion is helpful and it's holy. And by helpfulness it includes keeping a reign on your tongue. I know you, like me, have a list of things that you've regret that you've regret that you've said. And once the words come out of your mouth you've unleashed harm on others. Says true religion is helpful. And it begins by having self control of the communication that we speak, which sometimes is motivated by the anger that we have, which is why they go together. Says that it's helpful as well for widows and orphans in their affliction, that we're trying to not cause harm through our words, and we're trying to bring help through our deeds. That's true religion. It's helpful. And in that society, widows and orphans were the most vulnerable. Typically a woman would get married, have children, she would stay home with the children. The husband would work to provide for the family. If the man died, the woman was vulnerable. It wasn't like there was a social service welfare net. It wasn't like she could put the kids in daycare and go get a job. It wasn't exactly that way. It was more of an agrarian society. You're out on a farm. Your family's there to help you but that's about all you've got. And what would happen in these situations is that the worst and most despicable kind of men would take advantage of vulnerable women and children, oftentimes young women and small children. And they would try to manipulate and take advantage of this woman. And sometimes even try and take the children and put them into slavery or prostitution or sell them out as gladiators. The woman and the children would be very vulnerable if the man died. He's saying that true religion is having the father's heart for the whole family, and that Christians are like brothers and sisters. I've got two sisters and they've each got a daughter. I mean, if her husband died and my sister was vulnerable, and my niece was vulnerable, I would want to love. I'd wanna help. I'd wanna serve. I'd wanna provide. I'd wanna protect. That's my sister. And here he's saying that men need to have that kind of heart toward women and children. They don't say, oh, single mom, vulnerable. I could use this to my advantage. They say, oh, single mom, like Jesus' mother, Mary, somebody to love, cherish, protect, and provide for, because she's my sister and her children are like my nieces and nephews. That's the father heart of God. And that's the father's heart for all his men.

The pure religion is caring for widows and orphans in their affliction. So it's helpfulness, it's also holiness. He says, "And to keep oneself unstained from the world." When the Bible uses in the New Testament this word world, it's oftentimes cosmos. It has, I'm gonna nerd out for a minute, but it has at least seven different meanings. So sometimes it'll say like, God loved the whole world, means everybody. Other times it'll talk about the world in terms of races and cultures and groups of people. Sometimes the Bible uses the word world in a very negative and pejorative way. That's what's happening here. In this sense, the world is not just all the people, and all the races, and all the nations that God loves, but it's the evil systems that are in antithesis and opposition to God. There's the kingdom of God and then there's the world. And they're in collision. They're in conflict. And Satan works through the world to deceive people, to tempt people, to destroy people, and to oppose the kingdom of God. And what he's saying is that we're not in the kingdom of God yet, that the kingdom of God is before us and we're like pilgrims. We're like sojourners. We're like travelers. And as we travel through this polluted, defiled, disgusting, corrupted, cursed world, we're supposed to venture through it as God's people in a way that is completely unstained. Think of your life as a walk through a muddy, dirty, vile land, 50, 60, 70, 80 years. And at the beginning, imagine that you start with a clean set of clothes, but by the end you are supposed to still be clean, unstained, no mark, no filth, no dirtiness of any sort or kind, that's the goal. How many of you find that discouraging? How many of you are like, I'm not at the end and I'm already dirty? There are a couple of ways to read this text. You can read it in a deceptive, religious way. You can live a holy life! You can live a good life! You can live a pure life! You're not like those dirty sinners! You're better than they are! That's self deception. It's pride, which is the worst sin of all. You can read it like an honest person and say, it's too late. I'm already dirty. There are things I've done, I wish I wouldn't have done 'em, but I can't undo 'em. There are things in my past that are not in my present but the stain goes with me into the future. How many of you feel that way? How in the world are you supposed to walk through this world unstained? See, and here's what religion will tell you, clean it up, scrub it out. How many of you tried that? How many have been out to dinner and you spill something on a white shirt or white dress? You grab a napkin, put it in the water and spread it. That didn't help. That's religion. Scrub really hard to make sure that you grind the stain in deep. All you were trying to do was clean yourself up and all you did was made the stain bigger. Jesus and James were brothers who grew up studying the Old Testament together. They would have been familiar with all of the sections, the promise, the coming of Jesus, and his work. Many commentators would tell you that this, keeping oneself unstained by the world, that it is echoing some frequent imagery that God uses in the Old Testament. So I want to take you to Zechariah, chapter three. A text that Jesus and James would have been very familiar with, and it picks up on this theme. This was written hundreds of years before Jesus walked the Earth. And I love this book so much I named one of my sons after this man. We learned that Jesus knew the Word and Jesus did the Word. Okay, again, here's our question. How in the world could I walk through the world unstained? Then he showed me. God's gonna show you how you can do this. Joshua, the High Priest. Do you know what Joshua means? Jesus, you know what Jesus means? Joshua. Jesus' name is a derivative of Joshua. So here's what's happening. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit are up in heaven. Jesus has not yet entered into human history and God shows up to Zechariah and he pulls the curtain aside. He says, I'm gonna show you the plan. I'm gonna

show you the plan for history and salvation. You're gonna peer behind the curtain. You're gonna see into the future. This is a revelation, a prophecy of the coming of Jesus and what he's gonna do. And so he shows him Joshua, and Joshua is a priest, and what a priest does is a priest represents the people before God. So Joshua was standing in the place of all the guilty sinners like you and me. Then he showed me Joshua, the High Priest, standing before the angel of the Lord. So if it was in our day think of the angel of the Lord, sitting on the bench as the judge and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. Revelation 12:10 says that Satan is the accuser of the children of God, that he accuses them day and night. Satan is keenly aware of every stain, every stain that travels with you. It's your identity. You can't cleanse yourself from it. You can't hide it. Some of you live under condemnation because all you receive is accusation. And it says that he accuses day and night which means in the morning, you're devastated by it. And when you go to bed, it's the last thing on your mind. You're haunted by what you've done! Let me give you a clue. You know that the enemy is accusing you when you hear you. Some of you have heard it for so long you think it's negative self-talk or low self-esteem. It might be demonic accusation. You are a failure! You are a fornicator! You are a pervert! You are an addict! You are an adulterer! You are an aborter! You are a thief! You are a murderer! You are unloved! You are unworthy! You are unchanged! You should stop trying! You should kill yourself! You look down, you realize that's true. I'm filthy. I have tried to scrub it out and all I've done is grind it in and make it bigger. I have not walked through this world unstained. And the Lord said to Satan on your behalf, "The Lord rebuke you, oh, Satan." Now Joshua was standing before the angel clothed in filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, know this. I've taken your iniquity away." Your filth away, your disgrace away, your shame away your condemnation away from you. And I will, what's it say, "beloved." You've got to believe this. You're the beloved. You have to believe this. And I will what, clothe you with pure vestments. Religion says, clean your clothes, keep 'em clean! Jesus says, wear my clothes. I'll trade you for your dirty ones. This is Jesus. It is literally as if you are standing before the judgment seat of God and the accusing attorney, Satan. They did this, they said that! On this day, at that moment, they did this vital thing! I'll play the clip! I can't even watch. I am so ashamed of what I've done and how I've lived, and now everybody sees, and now everybody knows, and I can't fool this Holy God. The Bible uses over a dozen words to refer to sin in terms of defilement, filth, unclean. And then you hear the voice of Jesus, "Rebuke you, Satan." God is not the one who's condemning you. God is not the one who's accusing you. Satan is. It's so important that when you hear something you don't say, yes, Lord, I'm sorry, because there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Jesus says, "My sheep, hear my voice." You need to get to know the voice of Jesus. Jesus does not show up to accuse and condemn you. He shows up to convict and save you. And then Jesus says the most remarkable thing to you. He says, I would like to make an exchange with you. There's Jesus, he's wearing white symbolizing his sinlessness, his holiness, his righteousness. Did Jesus walk through this world unstained? Yes or no? Yes. What Jesus says is, I will trade you. You give me your soiled, filthy, stench-ridden rags and I'll wear them. And I'll give you my sinlessness, my holiness, my righteousness, and you can wear that. I will gladly trade you your life for mine. Know this, know this, you're the beloved. You're the beloved. And at the end of time there's gonna be a party in the presence of Jesus. The last book of the Bible

tells us. And all God's people will be wearing what? White. We're supposed to know this. What Jesus doesn't say is, they're good people, they did their best, nobody's perfect. They tried, we all make mistakes. What he says is, Satan, it's all true. And that's why I went to the cross and that's why I died in their place. And that's why I paid their penalty. And that's why I rose from the dead. And that's why I took all of their condemnation in exchange for my salvation. I took all of their filth in exchange for my cleansing. These are, they are, he is, she is my beloved. Satan, I rebuke you. I silence you. These are my beloved and they don't need to be righteous. They need my righteousness. Good news, amen. I want you to know this, and in your life everything you do should be motivated by knowing this. You can walk through this world unstained because in Christ you're already clean. And when you do sin, Jesus will gladly clean you. He will gladly give you his righteousness. He'll gladly walk with you. He'll never leave you. He'll never forsake you. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us of all of our unrighteousness. Dear beloved, I have good news for you. In Christ, you're clean.