

James 1 (Part 3) :16–27 • James warns about being deceived

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We are in the New Testament book of James. Open your Bible there, please: James Chapter 1. We're going to finish out Chapter 1 here this morning, Lord willing. We are picking it up in verse 16, so follow along in your Bible as I read: *“¹⁶Do not be deceived, (my brother or) my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every 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. ¹⁸Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

“¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

“²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For 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. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But 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.

“²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion 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.”

Stop there. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, as we get into the Word this morning, we completely rely upon You, Lord, and we humble ourselves this morning to hear Your voice. Father, we don't want to inject our own opinion here nor our own interpretation. We ask You to do that for us, Lord; You to interpret this Word, to speak to Your children, to minister to our hearts, and fill us with grace and insight. We look to You to accomplish that, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. amen. Amen.

You might remember that the last study that we finished here in James Chapter 1 had to do with how our own desires, carnal desires, play into the temptations of our lives, which eventuate into sin. And James reminded us in that passage that God is not the one who tempts us in those areas. He followed up now here in verse 16 that we are looking at this morning by saying, “¹⁶*Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.*”

You're going to find here in the latter part of this chapter that James is going to hover over this idea of avoiding deception. And this is something that we need to talk about, because we are reminded here that it is the work of God— excuse me, I said that wrong— it is the work of the enemy, in fact, in our lives, to bring questions and doubts as it relates to the Word of God into our hearts and minds. And that's when we begin to question whether God really loves us, or whether whatever is happening is good or right, or whatever like that. And Satan has been doing this from the beginning. We shouldn't find any surprises about it, but it continues to go on.

We remember in the book of Genesis that God created this beautiful garden for the man and the woman to live in, and He basically said, “You can eat it. Anything. Here it is, yours; you can have it now. There's just one tree. There's one tree in the center of the garden that I'm going to say to you, do not eat it. In fact, don't even touch it.” And that was the one prohibition that God gave to Adam and Eve and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was off-limits.

But you remember that the serpent came to the woman. And do you remember how exactly he framed his question related to this one single prohibition? Let me put it up on the screen for you from Genesis Chapter 3.

Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

This is a very famous passage related to this very first temptation that we see coming into the lives of our “foremother,” I guess is maybe the way to say it. But I want you to see what the enemy did here, because this is the point of what James is doing.

He's talking about deception, and he's talking about temptation. And we see here that the first MO of Satan is to inject a word of doubt into your heart related to God's Word and His promises, and to bring some kind of a shadow of doubt: "Are you sure? Did He really say? Is that what He meant? Let me ask you, do you think God really has your best interests in mind here? I mean, come on." See, just that subtle way of bringing some little bit of doubt. But what he's doing is, he draws the woman into the conversation, and that's really where he first brings her in, is to draw her even into the conversation.

Listen, you don't want to have a conversation with Satan, okay? You don't even want to start the conversation. But the first thing he does by bringing that little piece of doubt is to draw the conversation open, and so forth. And then after he has done that, planted that little seed of doubt concerning God's goodness, that maybe God's goodness is in question, then you'll notice what he does in that passage in Genesis. He goes on then to blatantly deny or to contradict what the Lord actually said. She says, "No, he said we could have the fruit from the other trees. It's just this one tree we can't touch even. Or, he said, if we do, we'll die." "And that's not true. That's not true." See, now Satan can take that further step in your life. Why? Because you've opened your heart to doubt and you've opened up the conversation with him in a very subtle sort of a way. And now he can introduce a blatant, flat-out contradiction that is not true. That's just simply not true. And then we all know how that turned out.

And let me tell you something. Just as James is warning us here in this chapter about deception, we need to remember that Satan has been busy deceiving people ever since. And I suppose I could probably spend all day mentioning all the ways the enemy can bring, and does bring, deception into our lives.

But let me tell you, one of the ways that I see this happening a lot today as I talk to people and converse with them, has something to do with... well, let me lay out the scenario for you. Maybe that will help: Somebody comes to Christ, they pray to receive the Lord, they open their heart and they begin their walk with Jesus. They're very new in the faith. They don't know much, and that's a dangerous place, in case you didn't know. So Satan comes along, and he begins to do just what he did with Eve there in the garden. He begins to inject some little aspect of shadowy doubt into their hearts and minds. And he will do that in many ways, but one of the ways that I see happening a lot is he will call attention to the fact that some of the struggles that they dealt with prior to coming to Christ are still going on in their lives.

Do you know, that's a very frustrating thing in people's hearts, I've come to learn. They come to Christ, and I think they probably have this idea that these

things are all going to go away, and they don't. Our sinful nature just doesn't evaporate when we come to Christ. I wish it did. But it doesn't; we still battle it. We still struggle with it, but the enemy comes along, to the new believer particularly, and begins to inject a word of doubt related to the fact that they are still being haunted by some of those past issues.

“So I thought you were a Christian now. I thought things were... aren't all those wonderful passages about being a new creation... aren't you kind of a living contradiction of that? I mean, I see that you're still struggling with all these sorts of things.” And once he gets a person's attention, his focus or his goal is to get their eyes off the Savior and onto the sinner.

That's what he wants to do. And by the way, he's very good at it. And he gets your attention off the fact that Jesus saved you from your sin, and he gets you to put your attention onto your sin, and it becomes a blown-up sort of a situation. It becomes huge. And because they begin to embrace all of this doubt related to their lives, Satan is able to take it then to the next level.

And let me tell you something about Satan. He always wants to take it to the next level. And so he begins to suggest, when the person is ripe for it, “Well, maybe you're not even saved.” And then he'll take it even further. If you open your heart to that particular doubt, he will take it another step further.

“I don't know if you even CAN be saved. I mean, look at everything you've done. I think you're disqualified. Other people can be saved. I don't think that's something that can happen with you.” And he begins to say, “Oh, all this church attendance and Bible reading and praying. I think you're just kidding yourself.”

“Fact of the matter is, God's not listening to you. And I think you know that, and I think you now realize He doesn't really care.” And that's about the time when they gobble all that down. That's about the time they start coming to me for help. And let me tell you something, it's a difficult situation because, you see, once a person begins to open their heart to that possibility, it doesn't take long before something rotten happens in their life. Because we live in a fallen world, rotten things happen from time to time. And so eventually something rotten happens, and Satan comes along and he goes, “See what I mean? Why do you think that happened? I mean, if God really loved you, would He let that happen in your life?” Do you see how this progresses? Do you see how this begins? And pretty soon we're in a tailspin. We are in an absolute spiritual tailspin headed for the ground, ready for a crash, and we're operating under almost complete deception.

And that's why James is giving us such a warning here related to this issue of temptation. First of all, don't even open your heart to the idea that God is tempting you because God cannot be tempted by evil, and He does not tempt anyone.

So don't deceive yourself. Don't allow deception to enter into your heart related to these things. And that's why James goes on to give this clarification that he does in verse 17. Look with me in your Bible. Verse 17 says: (Listen) “¹⁷*Every good 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.*” In other words, God doesn't change. He doesn't go from good to bad in your life. And he says that the perfect and the good comes from God.

All right, now stop there. I need to ask you a question. Is James saying here that all that rotten stuff, all that painful stuff never comes from God? Well, see, this is where we have to be careful. That is an easy interpretation for some people to make. I believe that everything James is saying here, by the way, is absolutely true. Every good and every perfect gift comes from God. The problem is that sometimes I have a different opinion on God's definition of good, and that's where the problem lies, you see.

We differ sometimes on what is good. Can I show you an example? Here's a passage from Hebrews Chapter 12. I want you to read this with me. He says,

Hebrews 12:7,11 (ESV)

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Now I want to highlight a couple of words in that passage or a phrase in that passage. Look toward the bottom there. See that it's kind of turned yellow there.

The words: “*The peaceful fruit of righteousness.*” I wanted to highlight those words for a very important reason, because I want to ask you a question. Would you classify the peaceful fruit of righteousness as a good thing? I would. It sounds good to me. “Peaceful fruit of righteousness.” I like that. All right.

Well, how does the good and perfect gift of the peaceful fruit of righteousness make its way into my life? It comes by way of discipline. Let me highlight a couple other words in that same passage. “*For the moment, all discipline seems painful.*” See, my point here is that the good that God brings into our lives,

which is that peaceful fruit of righteousness, comes about through something that feels at the time to be very painful, very difficult.

So you see, when the Bible says that every good and perfect gift comes from above, that doesn't mean you are always going to define it as good, at least not at first. In fact, you may define it as very painful, very bad, very rotten. And, "God, I don't want this," but God is going to bring good. See, this is the reason that we struggle when we see passages like this. And we're so prone to the voice of the enemy, when I'm going through a painful situation, when I'm going through a difficult circumstance, and the pain is hard, and I don't want it in my life.

Now, God is bringing good, He's bringing a good and perfect gift, but you see, I perceive it to be bad. And so the enemy begins to bring those doubts and whisperings into my heart related to this: "Does God really love you? Is this really the action of a loving God? And does He care? And is He listening to you?" and all the other things that go along with it.

And we're so ripe for deception, so we have a struggle sometimes seeing the goodness that God is doing, but He's doing good. You can trust that God is doing good, and that's why James goes on to comfort us in verse 18 by saying, *"¹⁸ Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."*

That reference of "firstfruits of His creatures" is kind of a fancy way of saying that it was God's idea to form Christ in you. Do you know? That's His purpose. His purpose in saving you, to form Christ in you, literally to mold and shape your life into the image of the Son whom He loves. That's His purpose. Do you know, that molding process is sometimes painful, hard, causes struggles and difficulties, but it's good. It is good. It is a good and perfect gift. What he's saying here is that your birth into the family of God was not by accident. He purposed to do this work in your life, to set you apart to be His child.

We have such a hard time keeping that uppermost in our minds when we're going through hard times, and we become so fickle in our understanding of who God is, based on what I happen to be feeling at the time. We let the enemy deceive us. We let him whisper in our hearts about who God is, what He's like, the depth of His mercy, the depth of His love, or lack thereof. We allow that to happen because all we can see is what's in front of our face. And this is me. This is me. When I'm going through a hard time, that's all I can see.

So James goes on. Verse 19, he says, *"¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."* Man, I wish some believers would get that through their heart when they're taking part in social media. *"...For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."* This is a word. This is a word to us as believers. Be quick to listen, be slow to speak, and be very slow to become angry. He's talking about, even at God, because we do get frustrated at God.

The fact of the matter is he reminds us here that our anger doesn't produce and doesn't accomplish in our lives what God wants to accomplish in our lives, in your life, which is His righteousness. He's forming His righteousness in you, and your anger doesn't do anything toward that goal. Doesn't do anything toward getting to that place.

Our anger only interferes with getting to that place. Human anger is a very, -- have you heard people talking about righteous anger before?-- I've told you guys many times. I don't think I've ever felt that. I don't think I have. I don't think I have that ability to be righteously angry. When I get angry, it's usually just very selfish, carnal, Paul-based anger. I know there's a thing called righteous anger. We see Jesus displaying it in the Gospel accounts. He was righteously angry at times, but that's not really a description of my anger. And my anger-- I am reminded right here-- does not accomplish the righteousness of God.

It's a good reminder too, not just about how we feel about God, but how we feel about the world. This last two years has been very challenging, hasn't it? I think we could all agree on that, and not just because of a pandemic, just all the political stuff that goes along with it. That's the issue.

It's like, we can handle a pandemic. Well, you know what I mean. Some of the political stuff is really hard to take. You can't sit and blame a pandemic for what it is doing, but the response that we've seen by nations around the world has been very hard to take. It's very easy to get angry at our political leaders and elected officials and that sort of thing. Very easy. If you ever find yourself reading the news and going, "Ugh;" it's a very easy thing to do, but we're reminded once again that our anger does not produce righteousness. It does not eventuate in righteousness. All it is is just anger, and it really doesn't do much good at all.

So James says in verse 21, (look with me again in your Bible, 21): *"²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."* Did you notice in the single

verse, James gives us two exhortations that are accompanied by two action words or phrases, and the first phrase is, “put away.” That's the first action phrase, “put away.” What are we to put away? He mentions “all filthiness and rampant wickedness.”

I was just saying, what is going on in the world. It's rampant. It's in the world. It's going on, and it's not to be something that we embrace. We're to put it away. Just put away all that junk. Don't take it on yourself. And that's one of the reasons why we have to say, “You know what, getting angry at everything going on in the world isn't going to help me to put those things away.” In fact, it's only going to probably heap some of that worldliness on me. So I have to put away what is going on in the world, because, you see, even unbelievers are angry. So there's nothing righteous about that kind of anger, or that kind of frustration. or something like that. So he says, put all that stuff away.

And it's another way of saying, reject the ways of the world. We are to reject the ways of the world, you guys. Think about the implications of that statement. Reject the ways of the world. Here's an interesting way that I have learned, first of all, not to be— get— angry about the ways of the world.

I have to remind myself that God has told me in His Word that this world is under, right now, the temporary dominion of Satan. He is “*the prince of this world*” (John 14:30, NIV). That's what Jesus called him. That's not my title. The Lord gave that, right? He spoke that about Satan, “the prince of this world,” He called him.

Now, what kind of a world do you expect it's going to be when Satan is the prince? What kind of a world do you expect here? But isn't it interesting? We Christians, we go around going, “What is this? What is this going on?” And we look at the politicians, and we look at the laws, and we look at the this and the that, and we're like, “I can't believe these people.”

Seriously? Do you know who their prince is? What do you expect? Do you expect the Millennial Kingdom to be on earth right now? There's going to come a day when we're going to go, “This is the way it should be done,” when Jesus is on the throne. But right now, Satan is in a temporary position of authority in the world.

What do you expect? You know what I expect? I expect “filthiness and rampant wickedness.” That's what Peter—or, excuse me— James says is going on in the world, and he says that is what we are to reject. “I reject that in the name of

Jesus Christ.” But see, we can't just go around rejecting all day. Have you ever met Christians that are like that?

They reject. They reject. They reject. They're always rejecting, and they have that sour look on their face because they are always rejecting things, and you have to reject that which is bad. But there is also another side of that coin, and that is that second action word in verse 21. He says that we are also to receive—notice— we are to “*receive with meekness.*” If you have a different Bible translation on your lap, your Bible may say, “with humility” or “humbly receive,” we are to, with humility, receive what? The Word of God. So we reject the ways of the world; we receive the Word of God. Those are such important things to do because, like I said, we can't just go around rejecting and never receiving.

And then as we're going to see in the coming verses what James means by humbly accepting what the Word says, is what it says about you. That is where the humility comes in. By the way, we're fine, I'm fine, hearing the Word of God when it's harsh about YOU. I don't mind that at all. If the Word is giving you a sound rebuke, I'm like, “Okay, then. Bring it on.”

And then the Word says something about me, and I'm like, “No, wait a minute. Wait just a minute here.” See, that's the whole issue of humbly receiving. Humbly with meekness. And that's why he says in verse 22, “²² *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only... (look again, he says) deceiving yourselves.*”

See, we have another warning here about deception. And this warning comes related to hearing the Word of God and not taking it in, right? I'll never forget a time when I was working in Christian radio, and we had a brother that worked at the station that had a hard time taking the Word in, and he was talking very negatively about people.

And this other brother who worked at the station as well had decided he was going to challenge him a little bit on that, because he, this guy, was always putting everybody down. And so this other brother went to him and said, “The Word talks about not judging.”

And the guy looked at him for a second, he goes, “You know what? You're right. I'm not going to let anybody judge me again.” It just bounced off. The Word did not, he did not receive it humbly. He just thought, “Oh now, there's a stick I can use to beat people with. Thank you.”

He says, *“Be doers of the word.”* Don't deceive yourselves. And the deception comes again from hearing the Word but failing to act on it. And I want you to notice that James goes on to describe the kind of person who hears but doesn't act on the Word. Verse 23, he says, *“²³For 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 he goes away and at once he forgets what he was like.”* And that may sound kind of humorous—almost stupid—doesn't it? Like you look intently in a mirror. You know how people do when they're... look, you ever see somebody when they— you probably have to catch them when they're not watching. But they get right up to the mirror.

They can look at every little pore and stuff, and look their face over, and then they walk away and they're like, “What did I look like again?” Again, that sounds kind of dumb. And even a little bit humorous, but actually there's more here in what James is saying than meets the eye. In fact, it's a very good description because he's talking to us here in this passage about what the Word does for us.

When we open the Bible, when we look into the Word of God, it is a mirror into our soul. It is a mirror into our hearts, and you know what the Word is going to do in your life and in my life? It's going to tell us what we look like. It might not always be pretty, but it will be accurate. And so you can imagine somebody who looks into the Word of God. This is that non-doer, right? It's the person who looks into the Word of God, intently, looks into the Word of God, puts it down, and then walks away and loses sight of what the Word of God has revealed about what's really going on inside of their heart. That's what James is describing here. Why?

Because they fail to act on the revelation that they've been given. Do you understand, people? The Word of God brings revelation to our lives. Revelation just means, “a revealing.” God reveals things about our lives. He reveals who we are, what we are, and it's often not pretty. One of the greatest examples— you've heard me say it so many times over the years— is our beloved brother Peter, at the Last Supper.

Now, Jesus revealed. Remember who Jesus is. He's the living Word of God. So what He says, reveals. So He reveals during the Last Supper to all the disciples, “You're all going to desert me tonight.” (Matt. 26:31) What is He revealing? He's not just revealing that they're going to run off. He's revealing what is going on in their hearts. You see, that's what the Word does. It shows us what is in our hearts.

“Guys, I just want you to know what is in your heart. You are all going to desert me tonight. Okay? Are y'all good with that?” That's not a fun thing to hear. Because that tells me something. It tells me that when push comes to shove, the cowardice in me is going to rise to the surface. I don't like hearing that.

Peter didn't like hearing that, and he objected. Do you see what he did? He looked intently into the Word, and then he turned away and forgot what he looked like. Jesus just told him what he looked like. “I'm sorry, Peter. I love you, but there's cowardice in your heart.”

“Not me Lord. Oh no, not me.” And he had to see it happen in order for him to finally embrace. And that was not an easy thing for Peter to see. You guys know what happens after three denials? It says, “*He wept bitterly*” (Luke 22:62, ESV). You know what that bitter weeping was all about? “That is really who I am. That's who I am. And that's a revelation I didn't want to accept. But now I have to because I lived it out.”

Isn't that fun? So the Word of God is this mirror. God shows us who and what we are and the action that we need to take is to say, “Yes, Lord, that's me. The potential is all there. That's me. And I lay that at Your feet. And I come to You, Lord, and I say, make me something other than what You've just shown my heart to be. Do that work in me that I cannot do in myself. You're not telling me to pull myself up by my bootstraps. You want me to surrender this wicked, cowardly heart and bring it to You.” That's action. That's taking action. That's being a doer of the word, right?

So that's that. That person who deceives himself. Now what's the other side of the coin? Verse 25: “²⁵*But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but (actually being that) a doer,*” being that one who takes action. He says, “*He will be blessed in his doing,*” because he believed God. He believed the revelation that he was shown through the Word of God. “Yes, Lord.” So here's my question to you. What has the Lord been showing you through the Word? About who you are, not who somebody else is, who you are, what is the Lord showing you? And is it a painful revelation? Is it kind of an ugly revelation?

I get that. Peter gets that. He knows what that's all about. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to forget, you're going to walk away and forget about it? Forget what He showed you, what you look like? Or are you going to act in obedience on it and say, “Lord, I bring this to You in the name of Jesus. I ask You to change me, change my heart.”

James starts verse 26 by saying, “*If anyone thinks he's religious...*” Now, can I stop you right there? Because we need to talk about what the word religious means for a second. It has changed its definition, I think, over the years. But you may find this interesting. I did when I learned this. The word religious or religion is very rarely ever used in a positive context in the New Testament. Did you know that? It's almost always used in a negative context.

I find that interesting, and notice how James uses it here. Verse 26, again: “*If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but (here we come back to that idea of deception again) deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.*” So here is this negative connotation of religion being a worthless thing.

Why? Because you got a guy who claims to be godly, but his words say otherwise. What comes out of his mouth says otherwise; it tells a different story, okay? So he goes on, and this is, frankly, one of the rare examples where religion is spoken in a positive light. Verse 27, he says, “*Religion (and what he means by that is devotion to God, love for God) 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.*” Notice there are two things that he lists there that he calls “pure and undefiled” devotion to God. The first is “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.”

Now you probably know that in biblical times, orphans and widows were particularly vulnerable to the cultural issues of –just– life. It was not uncommon for an orphan or a widow to starve to death if they had no one to take care of them. Now, this is not so much the case, obviously, today. What he is saying here, and again, James is citing something that he knew from the Word of God from the Old Testament, but he's talking here about those in our society who are weak and vulnerable and who can't take care of themselves. It might not be widows and orphans in our culture, but there are always going to be those who are vulnerable and those who need help. I mean, the unborn come to mind today, right?

But James also says at the end of verse 27, something else that is a sign of true, real, genuine devotion to God. And he says it is keeping “oneself unstained from the world.” I actually kind of like better, just for clarity, what the NIV uses here in this verse, because it says, keeping yourself “*from being polluted by the world.*”

I like the word polluted, because I think it's a clearer word picture of what it means when we allow our hearts to become enthralled with the world; we can

literally become polluted. I think we all know that the world pollutes our minds and our hearts and our souls.

And I'll tell you this, based on the communication that I get from believers, I would have to say that it is without a doubt one of the most challenging things that believers deal with in their day-to-day experience. And that is, how do I live, work, and play alongside unbelievers and not become polluted, influenced negatively against the Lord to the point where it has a negative impact on my devotion and love for Jesus Christ?

I get it a lot. I answer the question a lot. I don't want to be dragged down by the world's way of thinking, but I'm working all day long around unbelievers who use filthy language and are constantly talking about the way they deal with life. And it's completely the opposite of what the Bible says. And I'm just really concerned that this is going to impact me negatively. This is a very common sort of situation.

And one of the passages that I often share with people who are asking these kinds of questions is a passage in the book of Psalms. In fact, it is how the book of Psalms begins. Psalm Chapter 1, the very first two verses:

Psalm 1:1-2 (ESV)

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

“¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked (You know what the counsel is? It is the advice. So you could say in a more modern version of this, is “Blessed is the man who doesn't listen to the advice of the world.”), nor stands in the way of sinners (he's not there in the midst of what they're doing), nor sits in the seat of scoffers (it's so easy to scoff and mock); ²but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

So you've got these terms that are used here in this Psalm. The terms of walking, standing, sitting, and it is not just literally meaning walking, standing, and sitting. It's talking about how you have connected yourself to the ways and the people who are in the world. And the real question here— did you notice that that passage goes on to end by saying— “but his delight is in,” and then it talks about the Word of God. And I really think that's where the critical thing comes from.

Where is your delight? That's the question that we all have to answer, because none of us wants to pollute our souls with the world. But we have to ask ourselves, "What is my delight?" Here's the deal. You ready for this? The world can be delightful, okay?

Even in the midst of its wickedness and depravity, it can delight our flesh. And anyone who says it can't is on the road to deception. You have to come to terms with the fact that sin is enjoyable for a season. It's delightful. It's just like eating ice cream every day, all day. It's delightful, but it'll make you fat.

It's going to have an impact, a bad one, a negative one. So where is your delight? That's really what we have to ask ourselves and that we have to bring before the Lord. "Father," I have to come to him and say, "I recognize in my flesh, I recognize the capability of my carnal nature, being delighted by the things that I know you consider to be abhorrent. I see that in me. I know it's there. I'm not kidding anybody, and I'll confess it. But I ask You to do that work in me that I might delight rather in the things of the Lord, in the things that You delight in, Lord, and help me to delight in Your Word, because that is the way I'm going to get built up and strengthened."

That's what the end of that Psalm said. But rather, "he who delights in the law of the Lord." For you and me, it's just the Word of God, and he meditates on it. So you see when somebody says, when we're talking about not being polluted by the world, the ways of the world, it all comes down to influence, doesn't it?

Who's influencing you? Who's influencing your heart? I can work with people and say, "I refuse to be influenced." I can even live with people who don't know the Lord. And I can say, "I refuse to be influenced by this sort of unbiblical and ungodly philosophy and advice and counsel. I refuse because this is just not in keeping with the Word of God." But you see, again, I can't just reject. I have to also receive. So I'm receiving the Word of God. I have to be taking in the Word of God. I have to be meditating on it, thinking about it, consuming it, receiving it, so that it will fill my heart, and it will be the influence of my life. I want God to influence my heart and my life, don't you? I want to be influenced by the Lord and not the world, and that's how I'm going to keep myself from being polluted by the world.

We will stop there. Let's stand together. If you need prayer this morning, we'd love to pray with you. Just come on up front. We'd be happy to lift whatever burdens are going on in your life up to the Lord. We'll have some folks up here to do that.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Your Word today, Lord, some very important warnings for us in the Word about avoiding deception. And we have to confess today, Lord, that deception is a very real possibility in our lives. And we have to confess also, Lord God, that the building blocks for delighting in the ways of the world are already set up and operational in my life.

But Lord, I don't want to be delighted by the things that You hate and the things that You're coming one day to judge. I want to instead, Lord, be delighted with You. I want to be delighted by Your Word, and I pray that You would change my heart to delight in the Word and not the world. Father, keep Your people in perfect peace. Strengthen us to walk with You, to love You, to live our lives actively receiving that which is good, rejecting that which is bad and of the world, living our life for You. In Jesus' precious name we pray, amen.