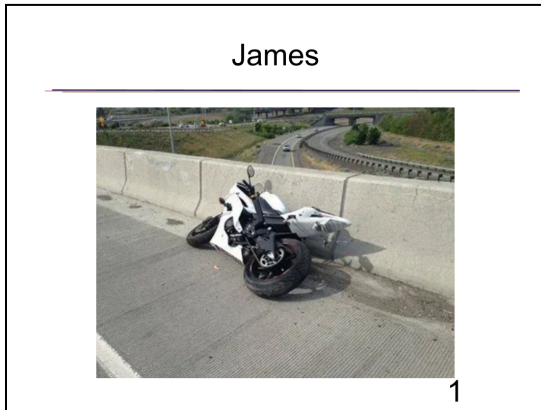


James

Russ Lewis
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I watched a YouTube video about a motorcycle with a camera mounted on his helmet and you get to see what it's like to ride a motorcycle. In the video, the driver comes up to traffic on a bridge and he speeds to the right to move past the traffic but a car clips him and so now you get to experience what it's like to be in a motorcycle accident. Of course, the comments are very negative about the car who clipped him. People didn't have much to say about the speeding actions of the motorcycle, which upset me, and I wanted to make a comment about this. I never sent it because God intervened and reminded me that man's anger does not bring about righteous results.



- James
- Wisdom literature (like Proverbs)
 - Small passages, scattered ideas
 - Memorable quotes
 - Written by James, brother of Jesus
- 2

I watched the Bible Project summary of the book of James to prepare for this message and they said that James is an odd-ball book in the Bible because it's basically wisdom literature contrasting with most of the other NT books that are about theological points or corrections which build logically.

James is not like this: it's a book of soundbites, a collection of pieces of wisdom that jumps all over the place.

This book was written by James the brother of Jesus, not James the son of Zebedee, who was martyred very early after Jesus was crucified. For perspective, James, Jesus's brother, and Peter met with Paul fourteen years after his conversion.

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You can see here the topics in James, and he comes back to many of these several times.

Of course, today I cannot hope to address even one third of these but I do have a few things I want to discuss today.

Listening to God

James 1:22-25

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

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First, I want to talk about listening to God because it is foundational to everything else we might get out of James.

Later on, you will see James has a tendency to confront us with uncomfortable things. Especially then, we need to listen and whenever we read the Bible.

We are often comfortable with our view of the universe, and think we are pretty nice people, until someone says they have a problem with the way we've been treating them. We dismiss these views and we don't want to look at the mirror in front of us. For example, I don't like to think of myself as fat but when I see a picture of myself I can't help but agree that I am fat. But this view is easily erased once I stop looking at the picture. I ought to be repenting by exercising more and eating less and dealing with the problem but I instead want to remove the uncomfortable confrontation.

Listening to God

- We love freedom!
- 1776

but ...

This applies to value systems as well. In Western culture, we love freedom and agree it should be our top priority. We celebrate 1776 when we fought for freedom and overthrew an oppressive government.

I was raised with no other assumption but then when I became an adult I read Romans 13:1,2.

Listening to God

Romans 13:1-2

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

That is not something that I like to hear nor does it fit with my value system. I haven't bought into it yet it is in the Bible as part of the mirror being held up to me.

Listening to God

Romans 13:3

For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.

... so maybe 1776 was ok???

I like Rom 13:3, however. So maybe verses 1 and 2 don't really apply and I'm free to do what I want.

Listening to God

- I'm not going to decide about government
- But we must **pay close attention** to the Bible
 - Never OK to just "ignore" uncomfortable parts

What is the answer? I don't know: do we rewrite 1776? Maybe, maybe not, but we need to look closely at what the Bible is saying. The world is not the way you think it is, you are not the way you think you are, and the way you think things should be organized is not the way God wants them to be.

Listening to God

James 1:20

Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

We need to pay attention, pray, ask for counsel but DON'T ignore it! This is important as we will see soon.

I opened this message with an illustration about anger: I wanted to post something to YouTube to make evil people repent but God said 'No.' Human anger does not produce God's righteousness.

Listening to God

James 1:20

Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

... so why did I want to argue about the motorcycle video?

Think about your social media feeds: how often are they expressions of anger about someone's evil or something to stimulate you to anger.

Is anyone living out Prov 15:1 in the culture wars today? These people are generally quiet and don't get a lot of attention.

If this is true, why did I want to post about the motorcycle video? I thought I was being righteous but really, I was being rebellious.

Listening to God

Proverbs 9:7-8a

Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults;
whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse.
Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you ...

Prov 15:1 says attacking someone brings poor results and Prov 9:7-8 says if you talk to a fool, they won't listen to you anyways especially if you think they need to change something. How often do we live this out? Don't throw pearls before swine.

But it doesn't mean we don't speak!

Listening to God

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

We often quote this verse: A spur is an irritant and makes us uncomfortable but is crafted for a positive purpose. We need to speak thoughtfully and lovingly and carefully to the people who are ready to receive it!

Listening to God

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

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Each of us has thousands of sins that you haven't repented of: This shows how patient God is. He shows us 2 or 3 things to work on at a time even though we have a giant backlog of other sins.

When we spur on one another, we have to consider if this is something God wants to work on in that person's life. We may be invited to keep praying about an issue until the time they are willing to listen.

Listening to God

James 5:19-20

My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

It's glorious and wonderful to be a part of the Spirit's call to repentance and you get to see a friend come to a better place.

Listening to God

Proverbs 9:8b-9

Rebuke the wise and they will love you.
Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

I think the guy who posted about the motorcycle was wrong but I am not in a relationship with him; I don't have any relational credibility with him. He won't hear me. If he was my friend, maybe I could speak gently to him. If he was wise and I was loving, maybe he would love me for my rebuke.

Listening to God

James 1:19-20

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Who has some stories about
this – good or bad?
(Don't criticize others, tonight.)

16

I want to open things up and we are going to do some story telling: I want you to tell me stories about things YOU did that were bad (not things that other people did).

I want to hear examples about gentle and harsh rebuke:
(PAUSE)

Russ: Once I was active on a church mailing list that was very political. I thought the other people "were such sinners" until someone I knew personally joined the list. Even though they were more provocative than the others, I wrote entirely different emails to them vs. the others because I knew him personally. To him, I was careful to craft my emails towards relationship restoration. God pointed out to me that I was to treat everyone on the list like this.

Sola Fide

Translation?

What does it mean for us?

17

I want to anchor you with another topic called **sola fide**. I think this addresses the way that James makes us feel uncomfortable.

Sola Fide means “by faith alone.” This means that salvation is attained by faith only, a product of the reformation. Martin Luther is most noted for this and even put the book of James in an appendix because he wasn’t sure it belonged in the Bible.

Sola Fide

- “By Faith Alone”
- We only need faith in order to be saved, not works
 - We never “buy” our salvation
 - We will not lose it by “not being good enough”

Any favorite Bible quotes about this?

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Sola Fide means we don’t work for it and we can’t lose it by not being good enough.

I scanned through the N.T. for quotes on this topic:

Sola Fide

Galatians 2:16a
A person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ

Galatians 2:20
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

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Sola Fide

Galatians 3:18
For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

Ephesians 2:8-9
For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

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Sola Fide

Colosians 2:14
[God] canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Romans 1:17
In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

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Sola Fide

Romans 3:22-24
This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

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Clearly from the verses above, our salvation is free: it comes by faith. But here are the contrasting verses I found in James:

Faith Without Works?

James 2:14-17
What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

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Faith Without Works?

James 2:18-19
But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

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James is saying that faith without works reminds him of a demon: you intellectually know what is true about God and you hate him.

Faith Without Works?

James 2:24
You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

James 2:26
As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

How to hold to *Sola Fide*,
and also honor James?
(t/p/s)

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I started this talk with James 1:22-25 when he said if we hear the Word and look in the mirror but then turn away and forget, then we are missing out. Part of our duty as a Christian is not to judge what we hear by whether it fits with what we know already but to allow it to judge us. Classically, people will take something that the Bible says straight out and then turn it into a metaphor so that they don't really have to do what it says.

I believe deeply in sola fide and I want you to as well. But I want to give James absolute respect and listen to him and learn from him.

In the last 10 minutes, I want to do something that I do with my university classes: think, pair, share.

I want you to think for a minute on your own, then gather into small groups to talk about our thoughts, and then come together as a large group.

Some comments:

It's like a team sport being on sola fide but we want you to get off the bench and play: don't play for the other team either.

Dancing and partner: the leader should be aware of the situation and the partner makes the leader look good. It's our job as followers of Christ to make God look good by our actions and deeds.

By grace alone we're saved but our works prove it.

Christians are a club and James is on the outside saying if you actually believe that, you should be doing something about it!

Back to Titus, if you believe something, your actions will follow.

There are other solas in the reformation: sola gratia (grace) sola Christos (Jesus), sola scriptura (Scripture): this is part of the whole, not the whole.

- Perseverance: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)
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- Rich and Poor [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)
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