

## Wednesday in the Word

Digging Deeper

July 8, 2020

James 1:19-27

Global Pandemic

It begins in an isolated location affecting one human being. That one person, now contaminated, immediately infects the very next person he encounters. A cascading effect continues on through every personal encounter that follows. Each interpersonal meeting causes the disease to spread like wildfire. No one is exempt. Even people who have had no contact with others somehow mysteriously find themselves ill. Somehow, asymptomatic carriers can infect others. A cure seems constantly unattainable. We can diagnose the symptoms and invent ways to avoid contamination but it spreads, none the less. Those who seriously try to avoid infection by taking every precaution find that they are mocked or alienated by others. We avoid personal contact but it seems to spread even through the air we breathe. The more we discuss it and debate it the worse it gets. Religions form around it. Political arguments develop. Lifestyles change. Disagreements divide loved ones. No one is safe. There are deep social consequences, affecting families, jobs, friendships, churches. Mental health disorders form, not to mention mysterious physical ailments. Anger and bitterness begin to play a large role. Nations begin to implode. Where does this end? Nations and ethnic groups begin to battle. When fully diagnosed we learn the truth about this deadly plague though many deny its existence. Viruses are named by their biological composition and year of origin. Covid-19 is the Corona Virus Disease of 2019. Perhaps the description above can be applied to our lesson for today. We are discussing a grossly different and horrendously deadlier disease whose symptoms and consequences are remarkably similar. This truly great Global Pandemic is much worse than the Coronavirus. The Chief Physician in charge of providing a remedy to all this is more than a very famous man. He is our Lord and our God. His earthly brother wrote a book detailing much of the diagnosis of the issue. We might name it Osid-4004BC. Its name is derived, as the others, from its pathology and origin. We know it as Original Sin Developed in 4004 BC. It was initiated in the Garden of Eden over 6000 years ago. Truly the deadliest plague to ever attack mankind. The Physician's brother is named James and he wrote his letter in the Word of God inspired by the Lord Himself detailing how his brother Jesus Christ provided the only answer to the scourge facing mankind. Let's take time to read about it in the Book of James 1:19-27. We first discuss one of the worst symptoms. Wrath. James, under the direction of the Great Physician gives us our diagnosis directive. Similar to taking two aspirins and calling in the morning. V19. He tells us to actively and quietly listen to others, seeking to understand, without immediately reacting in an emotional diatribe. Admit it with me that these directions are often very difficult to follow. V20. God's Righteous Wrath will one day condemn the world but man's wrath contains no righteousness at all. Our angry outbursts and violent displays are proof that we are sick with sin. Watch the news. This Greek word for wrath is 'orge' which is a 'violent outreach of the soul'. Watch a human in wrath and that description fits perfectly. Diagnosis; Accurate. V21 tells us what to avoid. Carbs? Sugars? Sodium? Nope. If you're sick with sin, read James' list of avoidances. Let's discover the original language for this list. Filthiness speaks of befouled dirtiness; moral filth. Superfluity of naughtiness. Great old English! It means a

superabundance of depravity. Wow! Want to get well? Avoid that last one! Like a Good Doctor, the Holy Spirit dictates to James not only what to stay away from but what to do as we convalesce. How do you respond to medicine? "Uck! Yuck! Bleah! If this is good for me I'd rather be sick!" Does God's Word make you sicker? Does it make you angry? Does it offend you? James tells us here to read and ingest the Bible in humility. Everything in this beautiful book is there to lovingly restore us to spiritual health. We must be honest enough with ourselves to recognize when God is pointing out our sin. Salvation is the growth resulting from the seed planted in our hearts through God's Word and the Gospel in Christ. Vv22-24 Challenge us with very practical advice. Consider a child who does not like to take his medicine. He may throw it out in the bushes in front of the house pretending to have taken it only to be found out later when a pile of pills shows up in the garden. Yes that really happened. Hearing we need medicine is not enough. Taking and ingesting the medicine is the only way for a cure. We cannot be Christians in name only. Christ indwelling us will change our actions and our very lives. Obviously looking into a mirror and seeing the imperfections in our face or hairstyle may be ignored because we don't want to change or don't care to. Or we could take what we could call the Fonzie approach. Remember how he would leave the men's room doing a quick check in the mirror as he pulled out his comb. He would look and acknowledge that he was already perfect. He would say "Aaaay" and then put the comb away without touching a hair. If we see our reflection in God's Word and read it to be without flaw we are but hypocritical Pharisees. V25. It comes down to this. We are all sick with sin. God's Word will show us exactly how and where we must change. It is up to us to have the humility to ingest that Word for our own good and allow Him to perform radical surgery on our hearts. V26. As we begin to see success in the healing of our virus of sin, our Geat Doctor schedules us for follow-up visits to begin to address some of the most difficult extensions of our malady. We can call this the "practice what we preach" part of our healing. Bridling our tongue is an obvious Horseman's expression. Most of you have probably ridden a horse at some point. If you do not put a bridle on the horse he will be released to run free in ignorance of his rider. A bridle is the controlling factor of this wild animal. Similarly our tongues are wild animals elsewhere described as being set on fire by hell itself. (James 3:6) God permits us to speak freely but He warns us to do so with a bridle or controlling factor on what we say. Does God filter your speech? Do you look to him before you respond to the comments of others? We Christians often lament the use of the word 'religion'. Like it's a dirty word. Not true. But we have made it dirty because we have so misrepresented Christ in the performance of our religion. Our religion is vain or empty if our words do not back up our faith and if our actions do not back up our words. V27. When we have been released from our Doctor's care and are finished with our quarantine we are once again allowed to walk among others. But it must be with a renewed sense of what the disease of sin has done to us. James hands us the book of 'faith plus works equals proof of salvation'. Our defense and love of the weakest in society becomes the very evidence that we have been made well and are living for the Lord. Speaking and acting for those who cannot do it for themselves shows that we are putting others first as Jesus did. That's all he did. He never put himself first but always served. We can take a quick look at a very interesting passage in the Bible to help us truly see the heart of Christ. Mark 10:45, John 13:4-5 and especially Luke 12:35-37. Now, Go ye and do likewise.