

Paul H. Dixon
Study in James, Part 3: Sin in the Life of a Christian
January 21, 1980

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

Oh, thank you, Janice. That was a blessing. Let's take our Bibles and turn to the book of James. We had a great day yesterday in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. I trust that you had good services where you were and many of our people involved in preaching and ministering. Yesterday morning, we had something like 1050 in the morning service, a number of decisions, public decisions for Christ. And then, last night, we had over 800 in the evening service. And again, God blessing and moving. And we're thankful for that and for what he is doing across the country and for the churches that are endeavoring to teach the word and win souls for Christ and reach their community for the Lord. I, of course, had been preaching from James and about this matter of faith and trials. And I had one.

Paul H. Dixon:

In order to get back this morning, we had to go by private plane into Murfreesboro and then leave after the service. Now, the problem was not in the flight. I wasn't sure I would get back. In fact, I had Dr. Johnson waiting in the wings to fill in. That's probably why you heard a little bit more from him than usual this morning, his comments on Dr. Jeremiah's book. Dr. Jeremiah, I don't know if I'd want him to push my book or not if that's the way he is going to do it. He thought he was going to have to preach this morning. And, of course, I did make it back but we had a beautiful flight. There was a storm front coming in and the storm didn't make it, we didn't get the snow. We didn't have to fly through it. Starlit sky, everything was beautiful.

Paul H. Dixon:

And, of course, Don Allen, one of our local men from the Grace Baptist Church, teaches agriculture across the street at Xenia High School and he's supposed to be listening this morning. Don is just a great guy, super pilot. He took his family along. We're flying back. No problem with the plane, but you cannot believe that man's automobile. He drives a hundred-dollar Vega. I mean, just being a Vega makes it a trial, but a hundred-dollar Vega... I needed more than wisdom. I needed a whole lot. The window on my side, half of it fits down in the track and the other half is sitting outside the car. Have you ever seen anything like that?

Paul H. Dixon:

And then, we get in at 12:30 this morning at airport, not at the hangar and his wife says it probably won't start. Now, have you ever walked up to a car, you're worn out. It's 12:30. You know it's going to be one o'clock till you get home. If the car starts, and she says it seldom starts. Oh, what a trial, but it did and we made it back and I'm praying for Don that car has cancer all over the place. And I hope it dies sometime this week before he takes me to the airport again. I like the plane but not the car, Don.

Paul H. Dixon:

All right, James is a great book. And we've been talking about showing your faith. And we saw that James chapter one is show your faith in the warfare. And we have noted that God has a purpose for trials. His purpose is to give us joy, to give us patience, and to make us perfect or mature, grown up. But, the same God who as a purpose for trials also has some provisions for trials. And we saw last week that God gives his will. God gives his wisdom. God gives his word, and God gives his reward. Now, today, we

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want to look at God's program for trials, but before we do, there are a couple things I'd like to point out to you again by way of introduction.

Paul H. Dixon:

It's interesting to note in the Bible how many people turned pressure and defeat into victory. And that is truly the test of life. The pressures all of us face, the surprises of life, the defeats, can we turn them by the grace of God into victory? Joseph did. I doubt that any of us will experience the trials of Joseph, but surely he came out on the victory side. He didn't grumble. He didn't complain. He turned it all around and endured it and experienced it for God's glory. Daniel did. A young man taken into captivity. Many would've thrown in the towel and many of his buddies did, but Daniel didn't. Paul turned defeat into victory. Stephen did the same. Let me share a verse with you that years ago someone shared with me, and it was new at that time and it's been a blessing to this day. And I'm sure many of you have already underlined it and some of you have memorized it, but for those who haven't, I just like for you to note it in the word. Keep a finger in James and turn to Job 23, please.

Paul H. Dixon:

The 23rd chapter of the book of Job, Verse 10. "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Isn't that beautiful? What a great verse. Why don't you set it to memory? Make it a goal to memorize that this week. "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." As we think today in James chapter one of God's program for trials, again, that unique union between a God who has a plan for our lives, a God who has a purpose for trials, a God who takes the initiative in his will and provides wisdom, and provides his word, and gives a reward in the end that we saw we can throw back at his feet. Revelation chapter four.

Paul H. Dixon:

This God also gives us some responsibility. And that's where we must not go to see. The balance of scripture is God's part and man's part. And there are those who want to camp on God's part and leave out man's part and you get all twisted in your theology and in your living. There are those who just want to be very practically oriented and they won't emphasize responsibility, and they end up with a man-centered humanistic Christianity and they leave God out. The Bible is balanced. God and man, God's part, man's part. Here it is. God has a program.

Paul H. Dixon:

What is our responsibility in the midst of the trials? The first thing we notice is prayer. God says, "I want you to pray." Verse five. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." God says if you want the wisdom, you must ask. "That God gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." But tells us what to ask for, then he tells us how to ask. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, to be honest with you, I do intend to finish the first chapter this morning. I had not plan to spend three sessions in the first chapter. And as it looks now, we're going to do well to finish the book of James during the spring quarter. And we do want to do that. We'll cover the winter quarter and the spring quarter and wrap up James. And the graduating class, if I have one verse to go, you'll get that for your

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commencement address. There are some points that I would like to camp on and I'd like to spend a lot of time on, but obviously, we can't do that. But just in passing, all of us know the vital part, that prayer plays in the Christian life. And I really don't understand it all. And I know the old question, "If God is sovereign, why pray?" And all I know is that God is God, and part of his great plan is that we pray, and that God works as we pray. God says he gives wisdom as we pray, and God meets us in our trials as we pray.

Paul H. Dixon:

And I do believe it's not so matter that our praying, what it does to God is what our praying does for us. And it is impossible to be a spiritual, mature, grown-up Christian, unless prayer is a vital part of our lives. And it's interesting how that James talks about being double minded. It's the word for being two souls. It's the individual who has the civil war going on inside. I believe that especially what James has in mind is the worldly Christian who is exceedingly materialistic. And the reason I believe that is because James addresses himself to this matter of materialism and riches throughout the book. And evidently, those people were having a tough time putting it all together and some of them were struggling. And they came in contact with some rich people and it twisted their thinking and they lost their priorities. And we'll talk about that more as we move through the book.

Paul H. Dixon:

But, the reason I think that is what I find in verses 10 and 11, excuse me, verse nine through 11. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he has made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

Paul H. Dixon:

In Palestine, I am told a shower will cause a blade of grass to grow. But also in Palestine, there's what they call the simoom, which is a south easterly wind. And when that wind comes out of the desert, it burns Palestine like an oven. It can destroy all of the vegetation in one hour. And when James writes to these people, they know what it's like to have that win. When he talks about "the sun is no sooner risen with the burning heat but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof fallen, and grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so shall also the rich man fade away in his ways," they could identify with that. And truly that's the way riches are.

Paul H. Dixon:

If that's what we're going to live for, if that's what our life is, the material things, the riches of this life, they're going to pass away so fast. We can lose them overnight. We may have a depression in this land. The handwriting looks like it's on the wall and it won't miss any of us. It'll touch all of us individually. It'll touch our families. It'll touch this institution. And the key to it is when that kind of experience comes, that we have single mind on the Lord and we can pray with that kind of mind, what a difference that makes in the midst of trials. But, I would also be careful to point out that sometimes we get twisted and we think that riches are wrong. It's not riches that are evil. It's the love of them. There are many wealthy people who are great servants of the Lord.

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I do not know whether I told you or not, but Art DeMoss died back in the summer. Now, please do not confuse Art with Ted. Ted spoke in chapel last year and many of you were greatly influenced by his life and what he had to say. Ted's a great guy. Ted is a cousin to Art. Art was in his early fifties, went out to play tennis, and drop dead with a heart attack. He left a business that's worth probably a half a billion. Not a million but a billion. At the funeral, at the memorial service, one of the speakers said, "I would like everyone here today Ted Demoss personally led to Christ to stand up." Remember, this is an insurance man, not a preacher. They said over 200 people stood to their feet. And here was a man who had riches but gave his life to reaching the loss on a personal basis and funding institutions and preachers and causes that were endeavoring to do this, used his riches for the glory of God.

Paul H. Dixon:

Back some weeks ago in the fall, I told you about a man who was prepared to make a substantial gift to Cedarville College. This man has a heart for Christianity. And we received our check from that man. And that check was the second largest that we have ever received. We received an estate from Ruby Lamb that was larger, but this individual gave us \$75,000 for the work of Cedarville College. He had a heart for Christianity and for the loss and a heart for missions, heart for Christian education. And certainly, we can use riches for the glory of God, but James is warning that we not make them the love of our life. We see that part of God's program for trials is prayer. And we must be careful that nothing hinders our prayer lives as we face the trials.

Paul H. Dixon:

The second program in trial is a proper understanding. You have to have your head screwed on right, in other words. And I want you to pick it up at verse 13, we studied verse 12 last week. "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God:' For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err," don't make a mistake, "my beloved brethren," on this important matter.

Paul H. Dixon:

You see, the temptation since the Garden of Eden has been to blame God. We always wants to blame God for his sin, and whether we verbalize it, whether we do it consciously, at least generally it's there subconsciously. And what can happen is that a trial that God allows to come into our life. Satan can turn around and make it a temptation. Now, God never tempts. God tries, the devil tempts. And what we must be careful is that we do not blame God when the difficulties come and the difficulties result in us sinning. You see, sin is serious, and God never cause us to sin. Sin is serious before God, and it should be before us as believers. And you noticed that the word here in verse 14, "enticed," it's the word to be lured by a bait. It's like those of us who like to fish and we go out and we throw our plug and we try to lure that fish to grab onto that bait so we can catch it.

Paul H. Dixon:

Every man, when he is tempted is drawn away by his own lust, and the lust results in sin, and the sin results in death. And this is LSD. Lust, sin, and death. I get very concerned when some of our young people get their lives thoroughly messed up in sin while they're students here at Cedarville College. I get concerned at any time for all young people and for adults, but especially when you're a student here at Cedarville College. And it is unbelievable to me that young people can sign a statement of separation

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and come to this college and then slip off and get involved in drinking alcohol. And that doesn't happen frequently. It is infrequently. It's just with a few, but I can't understand how anyone does it. Or, someone gets involved in drugs, or someone gets involved in sexual sin.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, young people, we have endeavored to try to give a blend here of some structure and some discipline and give you room to move. And you have the opportunities of getting in your cars, and contrary to some places, we don't send chaperones with yet. I've been thinking about maybe making Printy go with you every time you go out. That'll fix you. Boy, would she love it. We give you room to move. And then, some of you rascals go out there and you go places you shouldn't go and you do some things that you shouldn't do. And you do it on a work. And some of you just because of friends says, "Let's try it." And I'm amazed that, at least our experiences, many times it's freshmen, a high percentage. It's freshmen. I guess somehow you don't understand we mean business.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, listen, young people. I don't care if you're a senior, if you get involved in something like this, and I can almost guarantee you, there may be a rare exception, but I can almost guarantee you'll be on your way home. You won't stay here as a student. If you get your life straightened out, you deal with it and you want to try it again, we'll probably later on down the road let you come back and give you a try again. We have to deal with this. Oh, you say, "You have no compassion. You have no concern." Listen, our people have great concern. Our deans, Dean Rickard is one of the finest deans in this country, and I don't know of any man who is in this position who carries the burden of young people anymore than he does. And I have the young people from time to time come into my office after they've been caught, and I'll guarantee you will be caught. It'll come out. You can be sure your sins will find you out. They come into my office and they cry. And sometimes, I cry.

Paul H. Dixon:

They say, "How could we be so dumb? Now we have to go home. Man, you know what my dad's going to do to me?" I say you should have thought about that before you did it. "But, do you know that I have been trying to grow here as a Christian, and I will get home and I will be around friends who will pull me down. Brother Dixon, would you just let me stay here so I don't have to go back there and get pulled down?" I wish we could, but where's our consistency? What happens to our discipline? Listen, we have a heart and we have a compassion and we have a concern, but there has to be some measure of consistency and enforcement here. And my warning to you is not just for what it's going to do to you in Cedarville College, but what it's going to do to you and your relationship to the Lord and to your life and the scars that it brings. Sin is serious, and that's what James is saying here.

Paul H. Dixon:

He says, "Don't blame God for your sin." There has to be a proper understanding. And it's an interesting contrast in verse 17. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." God only gives good things, even the trials that come. "They cometh down from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And the word "variableness" and "shadow of turning" are terms that have to do with astronomy. The creation may vary, but the creator does not. Isn't that great?

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There's prayer. We have a responsibility there. There's a proper understanding that the devil may endeavor to tempt us as a result of the trial, but God does not tempt. We need to understand God. And then, there's practical obedience. You see, you cannot separate God working in our lives without us obeying what he tells us to do. We pick it up in verse 19. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man..." Now, James is dealing sternly with these people, very pointedly, but he keeps coming back with this warmth that is concerned. "My beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, I know you've heard the old adage here but it's worth repeating. What James is saying, if God gave us two ears and one tongue, we're supposed to listen twice as much as we talk. Most of us don't practice that. It's usually just the opposite. We don't listen very much, but we have a whole lot to say. It bothers me, when I get the reports, even in our school paper this last week, that young people don't listen in chapel. I'll be honest, I look when I preach. You may think that preachers don't see what's going on when they preach, but we do. And generally, I don't see that, but I understand this is a large auditorium and someone can kind of hide behind someone else and catch up on an exam and read a book, take care of some assignments, or maybe talk or pass notes or what have you.

Paul H. Dixon:

Every once in a while, in fact, I'll be honest with you, I've had a number of faculty members who've expressed grave concern to me over this. And some of you have been cornered by some of our faculty members, and I thank God for it. They tell me that they don't put up with it. If they see some of this horsin' around, they just go right to the individuals and talk to them about it, and I appreciate the faculty who do that. Some of you may come back and say, "Well, I didn't like that chapel speaker." What does that have to do with it? Well, where did we ever get the idea that we pick and choose who we like and what they're saying as to how we listen? The word of God has so much to say about our respect for his word and for the preacher. Some of you have not learned the difference between disagreeing with someone's point and not taking it out on the personality.

Paul H. Dixon:

I don't care what that person may say. You still should respect them as an individual and give them that proper respect and listen to them. Now, I also understand that some of you from time to time go to sleep. I'm a little bit more patient with that. I really feel like doing it right now. If I go to sleep during my message, would someone, would you take care of that, Brother Johnson? I'm tired. Some of you are tired. Maybe you drove all night long to get back. Some of you stay up late on exam. I understand from time to time that you might have a tough time staying awake and just tell the guy next to you to take care of that with an elbow when it happens.

Paul H. Dixon:

We had one guy, when I was in college, he'd go to sleep in every class. And one of the classic things I guess they've done at every school is halfway through the class to tap him on the shoulder and say, "The prof just called on you to pray." And he stands up right in the middle of the class and starts to lead in prayer. Wouldn't it be amazing to do that to someone in the midst of the chapel and tap him on the shoulder and say, "Chapel's over," and see him grab his books and storm out. That'd be a ride.

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Paul H. Dixon:

The funniest one though was we had this guy, and he was so heavy anyway. And every time he'd sit down, he'd go to sleep. And he's in this class and the professor looked out and it's the end of the class and he slept all the way through it. And he said, "Let's leave." So, the bell sounded and he still didn't wake up, and the class left. He met the other prof out in the hall. He said, "Quietly slip in." And halfway through the next class, he woke up and looked around. Talk about a surprise.

Paul H. Dixon:

We have a responsibility as to how we hear, "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save," and it is the word "deliver." Every time you read the word "save" in the New Testament, don't think it has to do with soul salvation. It is able to deliver your life. The word is able to help you in the midst of trials. The word "lay apart" is the word for stripping one's clothes, and may have to do again with the wealthy as we will see when we move into chapter three. The word for "filthiness" is a fascinating word that is derived from a medicinal term meaning wax in the ear. In other words, James says get rid of everything that would stop your ears to God's truth.

Paul H. Dixon:

Did you know sin makes us debt to God, and we need to deal with that. Verse 22, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, or you're deceiving your own selves." I think that most of us have had the unique opportunity of being exposed to a lot of truth. And we have been around Christianity for years. Most of you, all of your lifetime, you're part of a Christian home and a fundamental church, a Bible-teaching church, and many of you have been in Christian education and you're here. And we hear the word in the class and we hear the word in church, and we hear the word in chapel, and we think we're spiritual. That doesn't make a spiritual. James says it's the doing of the word that makes us spiritual. It's not the hearing of it. It's not our doctrinal statement. The point is, how has the word of God changed your life and changed my life?

Paul H. Dixon:

Sometimes, I have well-meaning people and I have for years come to me and they say, "I'm not being fed," and you will pardon me but I'd like to throw up on their foot. Please don't say that to me. Most Christians in this country have been fed and fed and fed. And the problem is not more feed, it's doing something with what we've already heard. And I don't know of many groups of young people who have had the tremendous opportunity to be exposed to as much truth as this group. And with that goes a fantastic amount of responsibility that all of us must give an account before the God who made us and saved us and who has led us. Or, if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, this is what he's like. He's like the man beholding his natural face in a glass, in a mirror. And he behold himself and he goes his way and straight way forgets what manner of man he was.

Paul H. Dixon:

The word for "behold" in verse 24 is the word for taking a glance. He just takes a glance in the mirror. I don't know about you, girls, how it works, but I'll tell you how it works with me and I assume with fellas. I've not talked to them about this, but I shave in the morning. I shave with a regular razor, not an electric. It just doesn't do the job for me, and so I get the Gotch's. And what happens is that sometimes

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I'm in a hurry and I guess sometime it gets me but I don't know it. And I go ahead and I wash my face and I comb my hair, and it's a great big glob of blood on my face.

Paul H. Dixon:

Did you ever go out to meet with businessmen or the board of trustees or your administrators with blood hanging all over your face? You know what happened? I took a glance in the mirror. I didn't really look. I didn't behold myself. I just took a passing glance. That's what we do with the word. We'd get up and we have our five-minute devotion, glance at the word and go through the day. Go to church and just glance at the word. We're there, we think that's enough. No. James says, "Whoso looketh," and the word for "looketh" is the word for someone who stoop sideways.

Paul H. Dixon:

He actually gets down there and contemplates, looks sideways into the perfect law of Liberty. What a study. "The law of liberty? You mean that law and liberty go together?" They certainly do. You can't have liberty without law. You can't have liberty without discipline. They're like Siamese twins. Seneca said, "To obey God is Liberty." "And continueth there in, he being not a forgetful hearer, but doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious," and the word for "religious" here is a fascinating word. It's only found five times in the New Testament. It means the outward practice, the service of God. If any man seen to be outwardly the service of God, going through the ritual, young people throughout history, men would replace service with ceremony.

Paul H. Dixon:

You can't do that. Some consider spirituality, some kind of worshipful false religious form. James is attacking that. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." It is empty. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." You say you're religious. You say you have a great grasp of spiritual truth and you can't control your tongue. James says forget it. He's going to say a lot more about that too when we come to the third chapter.

Paul H. Dixon:

If the word of God does not change your spirit and the word of God does not change your attitude, then I don't care how much doctrine you may know or who you may be. You are not truly spiritual in the life and the word of God. The Bible says James says that it will result in control of the tongue in verse 26. It will result in compassion for our fellow man in verse 27. And it will result in cleanliness or godliness in our lives. A practical obedience. James tells us what to do before we go to church, during church, and after church. As someone has said, that which is heard in the holy place must be lived in the marketplace. A lot to meditate on. I trust we'll do, I'd like you to do something. We won't do it all, but it's been so long since I've heard you sing Christ is All I Need. I need it today. Let's stand in closing and let's just sing it out. Everyone.

Paul H. Dixon:

Christ is all I need, all I need.

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God bless you.