

The Goodness of God Pt 2

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Bible Text: James 1:17-21

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Let's go back to James this evening, James 1 and we'll look at verses 17-21 and we're talking about the goodness of God. James is writing his letter to a local church as all the texts are really in the New Testament, at least the epistles, and James is writing to a church that is enduring a lot of suffering: they are struggling, they are anxious, they are bothered, they are agitated. They're finding themselves getting in fights and squabbles with each other and having problems and so, actually, the text of James and the things James will deal with particularly in this section tonight, dovetails perfectly, if you will, with the problem that Martha had with Mary in the text earlier today, how Martha is in the kitchen just knocking herself out, she wanted to do this great meal for Jesus and the disciples who, of course, were in her home that evening. Mary, her sister, is not helping her. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus just receiving and listening to his teaching and soaking it all in. Martha comes running in there all agitated, all bothered, all hot, angry, also fearful that she's not going to get all this meal together and get all this done and we have a conflict almost arising as she tells the Lord, she rebukes the Lord and says, "Don't you care that Mary is not helping me? Tell her to get up and come in the kitchen and help me." The Lord, of course, rebukes Martha and he says, "Martha, Martha, you've got your mind and concerns on so many things but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the best thing that can't be taken away from her."

The same principle comes out in James 1. Let's look at it together and we'll begin in verse 17 again. James is writing to this local church and says,

"17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. 19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

Quickly by review: we've already talked about the absolute goodness of God, that was I. The absolute goodness of God. He says every good gift comes down from God in heaven.

I talked to you about the fact that God is always good. He never changes first of all, and then he's always good. There is never a time when he's not good. Now, circumstances may not look like from our puny finite perspective that God is good but he always is good. Everything that comes down from God is good. Every perfect gift comes from him. Remember, we talked about God's goodness to his creatures, the animal kingdom, how there are so many things that obviously bring them pleasure and God designed it to be that way. We talked about God's goodness to angels, how angels are filled with exquisite joys being in the presence of God the Father. Why did he make them to even have the capacity to experience joy? Have you ever thought about that? That he could have just made them bland and non-feeling servants but the angels clearly express great enthusiasm and emotion about Christ and about the things of God and the goodness of God. We talked at some length about God's goodness to man, how he gave us five senses that are great inlets of wonderful pleasures and think about it, here we are in this fallen world and there are lots of things that are deeply pleasurable and can you fathom when you have perfect eyes and perfect ears and perfect sense of smell and touch and taste and you can be in the presence of infinite perfection and all the great, great ever-increasing pleasures we will have in the presence of God forever. God designed us to have pleasure. Why? The goodness of God. The goodness of God. All that is review. We talked about the way he constructed our minds that shows the goodness of God.

Then also by review, the redemptive goodness of God. Now, why would we sing our songs, do we focus so richly and so predominantly on the great truths of the gospel, the great truths of our salvation? It's because we can sing about God the Creator and God who made everything and God who gives common grace to all men, God sends the rain and God gives us food and God provides clothing and God gives shelter and those things are good to sing about but they're not even to be compared with the goodness of God in redemption. God's redemptive goodness exceeds in every way his common grace and goodness to all men. James pointed this out so strongly as he talked about verse 18, "In the exercise of His will," this is his will, not yours, his will, "He brought us forth," so we see the sovereignty of God in back of our conversion, our salvation. He brought us forth is a picture of being born-again and it is God who planned salvation. It was his idea; it was his will to do it. Why? He's good. Then we saw that redemption, what is the word of God? It was in his will, that's the plan, and then he brought us forth, that's his work. You say, "Now, wait a minute, somebody preached to me and somebody shared the gospel and I studied the Bible." Yes, but in back of all of that was the work of God. In the end of it, God gets all the credit for everything good that happens, particularly of course, in our redemption. Then we talked about how redemption is for his glory.

Let's go on now to new material and let's talk about God's parental goodness. God's parental goodness. He goes to a very practical point here and once again as we see over and over in the New Testament, we have these rich, rich doctrinal statements. James gives us a powerful statement on the sovereignty of God in salvation, how salvation is of God, we can preach on that for hours and hours, then right in back of that, he goes down to brass tacks and gets down to practical instruction for the children of God. Listen to me: doctrine is for practice. Doctrine is to live a new life. Doctrine is to govern us: how we behave, how we reciprocate one to another, how we interact, how we care for each other.

How we encourage each other. Doctrine affects everything. Doctrine must never be words in a book alone. It's wonderful that we have all these great theologians who have written all these great theological textbooks and systematic theologies but doctrine was meant to be lived out, not just studied and mused over.

So here James, pastor of the local church, throws out some great truths of God's goodness, great truths of redemptive goodness and then he jumps there in verse 19 and just, "This you know, my beloved brethren." In other words, you know that great doctrine, "But," here's the conjunction, "everyone must be quick to hear." That's practical, isn't it? Wait a minute, we were just glorying in the goodness of God, now you're telling us some practical instruction about how we're to function in our hearing. Once again, you ought to be a good disciple in your hearing. Then he says in verse 19, "slow to speak." You need to be a good disciple in the way you use your tongue. And then the last part of verse 19, "and slow to anger." You must be a good disciple in managing your emotions. Listen: as a child of God, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, your emotions do not control you, you control your emotions. "Now, that's just the way I am." No, that's just the way you choose to be. When you are born-again and Christ is in you, you have the capacity to begin to change even the way you think about things and the way you feel about things. You begin to change the things you have deep affections for. If you had told me when I was at the end of my 18th year of life that something was about to happen to me and I was going to go from finding deep pleasures in sin and wickedness and pride and self-centeredness and I would begin to have deep pleasures in the rich doctrines and truths of God and his word, I would have laughed in your face but God came in and changed me in February of my 19th year of life and my appetites and my affections and my desires began to change. You don't live by those old emotions.

Here's what he's going to say to you. Let me outline it this way. First subpoint under Parental Goodness is Reject Worldliness. He's talking as a pastoral father through James. God is your Father, of course, not through James but God is instructing us through James's writings and so God, as a Father in a paternal way, is instructing his children here. He says reject worldliness and the first thing he says here is: be quick to hear. Of course, he's going to balance that with the phrase "be slow to speak." Here's a good cross-reference to let you know what James is dealing with here in this church and that's in verse 2 of chapter 1 where he says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." The word "various trials" means "multifaceted." It means the trials they were facing were not just one trial or two trials, it was a multiplied variety of intertwined trials they were facing: there were financial trials, there were trials within their own homes and trials of marriage and trials of deserters and trials of false teachers and just all kinds of things coming against the church.

In our elders' meetings recently, we were just praying and discussing the shepherding roles and responsibilities and all the different things the different elders and pastors are dealing with. It just never seems to quit. Well, we're not facing the kind of trials these brethren faced because many of them were being locked in prison and even martyrdom was beginning to occur so they're really facing some heavy-duty stuff here and in the midst of that, they're getting angry at times, they're getting scared at times, they're getting

agitated, they're getting fearful and they're having fights and squabbles and quarrels. Again, what does James say in James 1:2? He says "consider that all joy." Wait a minute, James, it doesn't feel like joy? Well, feel that. God doesn't say things about what you feel, he commands you to feel a certain way. You choose to consider it joy when you encounter various trials.

Early in my Christianity, a wise teacher taught me to, as an act of the will, praise God for those situations that just really get you down. Just as an act of the will, throw yourself in praise and say, "Lord, I praise you that you have a purpose. I don't know what's going on, I don't know why it's like this and it hurts me deeply but, God, I choose to praise you that you are sovereign and all these things are going to work together for my good and for your glory." Sometimes I would just have to walk the floor and praise the Lord. Have you ever heard the expression "When you can't pray your way through, you praise your way through"? Have you ever tried that? When you can't pray your way through, you praise your way through. You don't wait until you feel like praise, you praise because the truth says God loves you, he has a perfect plan for you, he's working all things together for the good. Now, all things aren't good but he's working them altogether for your good and, of course, for his glory.

So James, again, tells them "get control of your emotions, don't act the victim, be proactive, don't be reactive and first of all, be quick to hear. Quick to hear. Whatever else that means, it means quick to hear the word of God. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." Just as the servant is to be quick to hear his master and just as a mother is so quick to hear her baby crying. Isn't it amazing how moms can hear a little baby crying and us dads sit around and say, "Where are you going?" She says, "Well, the baby's crying." "I didn't hear the baby cry." Well, moms can hear it. They're quick to respond to a child's cry.

That's the way we are to be to God's word going forth. There is a beautiful story in 2 Samuel 23 and David has been run out, really, of Israel proper, especially the environs around Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Philistines have taken control of the land and he's planning his campaign to recapture the land and on one occasion just speaking, I imagine he's like maybe Martha was or like some of these Christians in James's church are, he's just full of anxiety and agitation and he just cries out in prayer and says, "O, that I could have a drink of the waters of the springs in Bethlehem." He no longer got that phrase out of his mouth and three of his mighty men took off, sneaked their way courageously through the Philistine lines, got a vessel of water, fought their way back out through the Philistines and, "Here, David, here's your water you asked for from Bethlehem." Quick to respond to their master.

That's what this means here. Quick. Are you quick to receive the word of God? Now, wait a minute, some of you have sat under preaching for so long, let me ask you, are you quick to receive it? Or are you more quick to analyze it? Or more quick to think on it? Or more quick to evaluate it? That's not what the text says. Quick to hear. "Lord, when you show me where an attitude is wrong, where you show me a disposition that is not

pleasing to you, where you show me my desires are not right, I want to be quick to call your word truth and my way wrong.” Quick, James said, to receive the word of God.

He says also there in verse 19, not only quick to hear, slow to speak. It's been said a million times but it's worth saying again: God gave you two ears and one mouth. Amen. My, my, my, could I count if I had a million fingers and toes, well, maybe with a million, but could I count the times I wished I hadn't said anything? Can you count the times you wished you hadn't said anything? Quick to hear, slow to speak. Too often we argue and too often we argue with God and God's word. Maybe you don't do it always audibly but you may do it in your heart and in your mind. Proverbs 10:19 says, “He who restrains his lips is wise.”

Again, the context is: these people are getting on each other's nerves. There is a lot of fear; there is a lot of anxiety; there are a lot of questions; they're hurting; they're getting in fights and fusses and so look at the last part of verse 19: quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Again, when things are difficult it's just easy to get angry. Martha in the earlier message today is in the kitchen, cooking, trying to get the whole meal together and she's just all full of anxiety and she gets angry at Mary because Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus and is not helping her.

Now, remember the story of David? David has committed the evils of taking another man's wife and David has committed the wickedness of having that man killed in battle, having him put on the front lines so he'd be killed and then Nathan, the prophet, comes in to David and he begins to tell a fictitious story about a family that was wealthy but took a poor neighbor's pet lamb because they were so greedy and selfish they wouldn't take their own livestock. They went to a poor neighbor, took their little pet lamb and served it for their meal and David heard that story and the Bible says he became angry and then Nathan looked at him and said, “Thou art the man.” He was quick to anger. He should have had some mercy. Remember the Apostle Peter in the Garden when the soldiers came to arrest the Lord Jesus Christ? Peter was slow to hear, quick to speak and quick to anger. He almost cut a man's head off. Jesus had to rebuke him and call him back. I wonder how many church fights would be avoided if just one person would be slow to anger and slow to speak? Just back up and don't let it out.

Temper, you see, is a very valuable thing and it's a shame to lose it. Temper is a gift from God, anger can be very good but not if you lose it. It needs to be utilized. There is a godly anger that is a godly anger or righteous indignation against sin. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26, “Be angry and yet do not sin.” Psalm 97:10 says, “Hate evil you who love the Lord,” so there is to be a hatred of evil. There is to be an anger against those who just brazenly and willfully promote that which is anti-God and against our Lord. So, anger has a rightful place but using it because we're frustrated and we're fearful and we're full of anxiety and we just pop off all the time is what James is talking about must be stopped.

So he gives a parental instruction. He says, “Wait a minute, be quick to hear,” a good thing to teach children and even better to model it for them, “slow to speak, slow to

anger.” How wise, moms and dads and grandmoms and granddads, how wise to teach your children that they are not enslaved to their feelings, that they in Christ can begin to tell their feelings how to feel and not control them?

He goes on here and he adds a balancing side to this and builds on something we've talked about a little bit more. Verse 20, he says, “for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness.” Let me talk about that just for a moment, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. That word “filthiness” is the picture of just a filthy garment. It's like you wearing an item of clothing that's just saturated with filthiness. Now, the filthiness he's talking about is the idea of malice. It's the idea of desiring an evil thing to happen to another person. That's a real common thing, as a matter of fact, are you listening to me? Before Christ changes your heart, that root is firmly established in every person's heart. Now, they may not let it out but it's there. Do you know why? You have no core being except self before Christ changes you and so if anyone threatens yourself, challenges yourself, tries to diminish you or hurt you or defame you, I mean, the taproot of your soul is strike back and it is so basic and so natural to the worldly man to want to do evil or to desire evil to come against the person who has tried to wrong them.

Here's what James is saying, “Now that you're a child of God, that must be taken off.” It's just like a garment. He said, “Now you can choose to take that off and lay that aside.” Now, as a child of God you may go pick it up every now and then but you can't pick it up and hold that cloak long until you want to throw that filthy thing down again, that malice, that desiring evil to happen to someone else. You know what I believe and I'm confident of this: that I'm talking to a lot of people at this very time and it's been a long, long time since you genuinely desired something bad to happen even to your enemy. Has God not grown so many of you to where when you're hurt or mistreated, that pretty soon the Spirit of God speaks to you and you catch yourself and say, “Well, I'm worse than that except for the grace of God. God, I pray you have grace on them. I pray you'd be merciful toward them. I'm not wanting you to bless their sin and wickedness but, Lord, I'm just not going to desire evil against them.” That's what he's saying, “Take that off. Don't carry that kind of malice.” Wickedness is the same kind of idea. It's amplified a little bit more, desiring to see others hurt. In other words, get rid of that stuff. That is the essence of the unsaved, unregenerate, worldly man. It doesn't fit you as a child of God.

Not only removing or rejecting worldliness, secondly, receiving the word. Look at the last part of verse 21. In place of that and that's so important that you understand in Christianity you don't just get stuff out, you replace it with something else. “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility,” that's the key word, humility, “receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” You know, the one essential mark of the regenerate heart is humility. How can you come in and sit under the uncompromised preaching of the word of God unless God has given you a supernatural capacity to humble yourself and be a repenter? Again, when you're saved, you didn't just repent, when you're saved, you became a repenter. You started a new lifetime of receiving the word and repenting, receiving the word and repenting, receiving the word and repenting and hopefully, in God's grace, Christ in you, continues to sanctify

you and you become more and more like Christ, a progression of sanctification keeps occurring until you get home one day and then you have glorification. You become a repentor and you grow in sanctification by humbly receiving the word of God. It has the idea of receiving it in meekness, receiving it with a yielded spirit, without arguing back to the word of God.

He says “receive the word implanted.” That has the idea of let it take root in your lives. I think I’ve had the wonderful, wonderful privilege, well, I know I’ve had the wonderful, wonderful privilege of staying in one church for 33 years and watching hundreds of people, hundreds of people who have let the word take root in their lives and I see it begin to put on the rich characteristics and attributes of a Christian, put on the rich characteristics and attributes of Christ in their lives where they have begun to take off the old filthiness and wickedness and walk in the new Spirit of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He says there in verse 21, “receive the word implanted,” let it take root in you, “which is able to save your souls.” By the way, let me just back up and say this: for the word to take root in you, that takes some T-I-M-E. It takes some time. The farmer doesn't just go out there and plant a seed and it be rooted in two days, it takes a few weeks and then it starts to come up as a sprig and it takes more weeks and it takes more cultivation and it takes more weeding, it takes nutrients and then finally it begins to flourish and finally the fruit comes on and that's what has to happen. So, it would behoove all of us to be real patient with one another and very patient especially with new believers. I mean, doggone, new believers sometimes can act just like they didn't get saved and we think what in the world is wrong? But here is the difference: they may not act like they're saved but if you deal with them lovingly and with the word of God, they will humble themselves and say, “Help me. I want to get back on track. I want to receive the word. I want to take off all the old typical worldly filthiness and typical worldly wickedness that has a malice, a desiring to hurt others. I want that to be off of my life. I want to, in humility, receive the word implanted.”

Notice what he says there in verse 21, last phrase, “which is able to save your souls.” Now, that's an interesting truth. Here you have a place in the Scriptures where he is not talking about justification. It's not being saved from the penalty of sin. It's not the salvation of being saved from having a standing of guilt and condemnation being saved over to have a standing of justification and righteousness before God. That's not what it's saying. It's talking about a sanctifying salvation, the salvation of sanctification and that's a part of your salvation, by the way. There's justification and that's immediate and once-for-all, it's a new standing before God. Then there's the process of sanctification and that's what he's talking about here. If you will as a pattern, in humility, be a repentor and put off filthiness and wickedness that are characteristics of worldly people, unsaved people, and you will, in humility, receive the word, continual process, let it implant in your life, let it take some root into your life, you will begin seeing your life being saved from worldly waste, a life being given over to the temporal values and the temporal purposes and patterns of this world and a life saved to being used for God and God's purposes, following God's principles and for the building of God's church and spreading God's

glory. Did you get that? Saved from a wasted life on the temporal things of earth, saved over to God to be used for God and his glory which lasts for eternity. Have you seen that happen? Some of you are good workers. You're valuable. You help win souls. You help disciple those around you. You teach the word. You're an encourager. You check up on people. You go after those who stray in sin; you try to love them and call them to repentance. All of these are things where now your life has been saved for just using your life for whatever the world says is important and now using your life for the things that really matter. That's what he means here. You're saving your soul from being wasted on this temporal world and this temporal earth.

Man, I tell you, it's a tremendous blessing to a pastor to pastor a people who are a good degree down this road of saving their soul from waste because you lose all the pressure and the burden of, "How can I keep them motivated? How can I keep them coming? Let's give away a bicycle. Let's let the men have a party. Let's let the ladies..." There's nothing wrong with special events and having some fun, I'm not saying that, I'm just saying that when people begin to have the word implanted, they have spiritual appetites and you don't have to pacify them with fleshly things. They just want to go on for God and that's a great, great blessing. Do you know how few pastors get to pastor churches like that? Not because they're not good men, not because they're not courageous, they just somehow in God's sovereignty many just don't have that wonderful privilege.

Well, if you're not putting off that common worldliness of wickedness and filthiness, if you are not as a pattern receiving the word of God with humility, letting it implant and take root in your life, then what happens is your souls becomes a worldly weed bed instead of rich fertile ground that produces great and glorious fruit for the glory of God. That's what James is saying here. Now let's get back to the goodness of God. You think, "What's this got to do with the goodness of God?" That is wonderful goodness that God would give you such parental practical instruction. Don't you spend all of your time, mom and dad, teaching your sons and daughters "do this, don't do that" because it's good for them? Study this, get this degree, learn these disciplines, learn how to take care of these things, learn how to wash this, learn how to organize this. We do it, why? Because we're good. We want to do good things for our children. Here God in his parental goodness says, "Alright, as a child of God, here's some basic instructions. Get this down. Throw off, reject worldliness, the common things of the world and receive the word and grow in that." What a goodness it is of God to instruct us and even rebuke us concerning all these things because these are things if we were left in our worldliness, that would destroy us, ruin our lives and so by giving us these guidelines and these instructions, he saves us from temporal and eternal ruin.

I want to shift gears now and I want to give you some conclusions for practical application which come from the text we looked at earlier today. I didn't get to it this morning but as I was studying this again this afternoon, I thought these are the same principles we saw in Luke 10. This is the same stuff Martha and Mary had going on. The same kind of frustrations and arguments and wishing bad things. I don't know for a moment there when Martha came out of the kitchen red in the face and hot under the collar and angry, I don't know that she might have had an evil thought toward Mary there

for a little while and for a moment she had slipped into a worldly filthiness. A worldly wickedness came up in her heart and I believe when the Lord said, “Martha, Martha,” he gave her a double Martha, remember? I believe then she caught herself and said, “Whoa, this isn't who I am.” Hey, aren't you glad God catches you? Aren't you glad? I remember a preacher saying years ago, he said, “Man, I wished I could sin and get by with it.” He was talking about how do all these Christians get involved in wickedness and just go on in it as a lifestyle pattern, kind of indifferent to who knows or God knows or anything. He was talking about the fact that, “God catches me.” Well, God caught Martha and God catches us.

Let's get to these CPAs: conclusions for practical application. I'm going to do a little repetition from this morning but I believe this area of being anxious deserves a little more attention. First of all, we talked about when you have an anxious heart and I'm talking about the whole spectrum of worry, being bothered, being depressed, downcast, you use the word, what do we need to do about that? First of all, just determine in your heart, “I'm repenting of these emotions and I'm going to fight the fight of faith.” Brothers and sisters, you have to – listen – you have to lift yourself up, gird up your loins as the Bible would say, as an act of your will and look that desire, that agitation, that anxiety or even that depression straight in the eye and say, “That is sin.” Call it sin. Say, “That' sin. I am not going to foster this.” I'm telling you, the first time you begin to do that, it is so strange because feeling that way is as natural as breathing, I mean, feeling the anxiety or feeling down or feeling anxious. It's just like you feel like you're supposed to be this way and that's where you have to overcome that with the truth. You take the truth of the word of God and attack it first with repentance.

Let me back up with one thought: sometimes, brothers and sisters, somebody is so hurting and they're so down that they don't need to be told to repent just yet, they need to be encouraged with hope. They just need to know, you need to give them some hope first and so you kind of have to balance that. By the way, you're always throwing hope in there all the time and really if you understand repentance, repentance is a hopeful thing but I'm saying if you're like your pastor and you have a strong prophetic gift, discipline yourself not to just come out of the gate with, “Repent!” Back off a little bit. Try to give them a little hope and then charge them in love to repent of that emotion.

As a matter of fact, why don't you turn to Philippians 4 and we'll look at it for just a second. That's what I referred to at the end of the message earlier today and it's such a helpful thing. Philippians 4:4, notice the principles here, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” Again, that's a choice, not a feeling. The feeling will come after you make the choice to do it. “Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.” Here it is, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication.” Prayer is just a general word for prayer but the word “supplication” has more of the sense of need, “God, here's where I am.” Then he says, “with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on

these things.” Command here. Didn't say “feel these things,” it said “dwell on these things.”

So, 99.9% of the time in my experience, when I'm worried, when I'm anxious, I'm depressed, I'm short, I get angry at people, I'm not thinking on what's true, what's lovely, what's pure. Amen? So that means I need to repent. I need to say, “Lord, I am choosing to think on things...” First of all, the biggy here I think is what's not true because 99.9% of the time when you're full of anxiety and worry and concern, you convince yourself something's true that's not true. You say, “Well, this is going to happen. Well, that's going to happen. Now that's going to happen.” How do you know that's going to happen? The Lord may come back this afternoon and none of that may happen. That's the truth and you've got to quit being a prophet of doom about the future when you do not know the future so repent of concluding all these negative things are about to happen, all these dominoes about to fall when you don't know they're going to fall. That's a place where you are thinking on what's not true. You've drawn a conclusion you don't know to be true. It's a sin issue. Now, psychologists don't call it that but the Christian counselor does. You do it with compassion, of course, you do it with love and longsuffering but that's a sin issue. We have the capacity to deal with our emotions that other men don't have the capacity to do.

Alright, so you repent, then you think on what's true and the one thing that we know is true and this one specific instruction comes out in verse 6 is: thanksgiving. That's why I told you earlier if a person is downcast, if they will do this, it will lift their spirits. First of all, the repentance has to start and, again, it's a continual process, you keep attacking the wrong thinking with repentance. Call it what it is. Let me help you with a couple of things you need to repent of, alright? When you're anxious, downcast, angry, fearful, 99.9% of the time selfishness is involved. Think about it: can you really be worried without thinking about yourself? I mean, even if you're worried about your children or whatever, ultimately it comes back to yourself. It really does. If it's selfishness involved, always pride is involved so start saying, “God, I repent. That is self. I am just worried about me.” Think about it: if you die to yourself what are you worried about? Are you with me? I mean, really, if you strive to die to yourself, there's not much left to worry about. I sometimes think I can find something to worry about if I need something, you know. Are you one of those? And you have to fight that and I'll go to heaven fighting it but I'm going to go to heaven fighting it. I'm not going to go to heaven just giving in to it and flowing down the river of worry. At least I can jump out on the bank and fight back and go in the other direction some and that's what we need to do.

So, you're confessing those sins and then get you a piece of paper and just start and start writing down everything you can think of to be thankful for. You can start by saying: this anxiety, I'm thankful for this anxiety because it reminds me of the truth that God works all things together for the good. Whatever these things are that are causing me to be anxious actually God's going to turn them for good so I even thank God for the anxiety or the thing that caused the anxiety. I thank God for this person, that person. You thank God for the things that are supposed to be negative because God is going to mean them for good and then you thank God for all the good things. I mean, discipline yourself and

write those things down and I've even had a person, they were so downcast, I made them keep cards in their pocket and they had about a 30 minute drive where I said pull that card out when you're going to work and you start thanking God for the good things in your life.

It's amazing how you can reprogram yourself but you know what? We want a McDonald's fix. You want glorification now. You just want, boom, to have a perfect mind now. No, you're not going to have a perfect mind now and by the way, though, again, I want to be careful, I want to be compassionate, I want to be balanced, I understand there are seasons when people may need something from the doctor to get through some seasons, I don't want to condemn you for that but I do not want you to be a long-term victim and a dependency on chemically altering your brain either. I'm convinced of this: if you will do what the Scripture says, I'm convinced it alters the chemicals in your brain. As a matter of fact, science proves that. You can go through all kinds of emotions and they can tell you that it changes the chemicals in your body and I believe when we throw ourselves into repentance against wrong thinking, repentance about selfishness, repentance about pride, repentance about being worried when we don't know if we've really got anything to be worried about or not and we throw ourselves into profusely committing ourselves to thanksgiving toward God, I believe it begins to change things and slowly you build a new beach-head, I call it, a beach-head of strength and a beach-head of hope and a beach-head of encouragement in your life.

As Christians, we need to remember, think about now that we have a good biblical understanding of conversion, how many years we wait and pray and witness and preach before we see some of our young people come to Christ? But do we quit? No, we preach some more and we study the Bible with them some more and we witness to them some more and we urge them to seek the Lord for their souls some more and we tell them about the sin that's in their life some more and we tell them about the grace of God some more and then finally the day comes when the Spirit of God brings them to repentance and faith. Friend, you may have a 6-8-10 years journey before you get to a certain plateau of peace in your heart but that's part of the sanctification process and we're all on that journey together. That's why the church is so important, we all struggle and we all help each other.

Here's a key insight for the anxious heart: not only repent and fight in faith, that's what I've been talking about but, secondly, receive guidance from God ordained authority. Receive guidance from God ordained authority. Two sources, the word of God. When you're thinking about what are you worried about and let's go back to Martha in Luke 10, Jesus spoke to Martha, I think that's good authority. Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you're worried about so many things. Mary is your example right now, Martha. You ought to be like Mary." See, instantly, anxiety gone, worry gone, frustration gone. The King of the universe just said to, "Get supper and go sit at my feet like Mary. We'll call out for Chinese if we have to. Don't worry about it." Here's the problem: many of you look at what God's word says you're to be doing, you're to be thinking what are your responsibilities, and you kind of bypass those and you get right back into the worldly

concept of all these things you've got to be concerned about and that's where a great source of frustration is.

Now, a very, very good thing to do: wives, sit down with your husbands and say, "You're my spiritual authority. I'm worried and I have anxiety about all these things." Husbands, be compassionate, be patient, be kind-spirited but give your wife some guidance. Say, "Sweetheart, leave that alone. Don't worry about that area. That's something you don't need to be concerned about. Just take care of these areas," and that can just lift great burdens that very good hearted, well-intended ladies put so much on themselves and they don't need all that on themselves. God didn't mean for them to have all of that on themselves.

Men who are concerned and anxious and worried about so many things: go to maybe a church elder or a pastor in the church and says, "Look, I've just got all these burdens," and it is amazing how an objective brother can look at your life and say, "Why are you concerned about this and this and this?" "I've got to be," you're kind of like Martha, "I've just got to get this meal done," and you just need a good firm word from another brother to say, "No, that doesn't have to be worried about. Let that alone. Scripture says worry about this, this and this." Not worry about it but let these be your concerns.

So, God ordained authority can give you lots of help in taking off of you unbiblical concerns and worries and responsibilities you put on yourselves. I'm convinced Satan does it. I'm convinced Satan is a mastermind at working out there and heaping stuff on people that they're not supposed to have on them. Remember Romans 13:2, it says, "Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." If you resist the help God gives you through biblical authority than you reap condemnation on yourselves.

Let me go to just one final thought. I'm not going to give you all these CPAs because we've covered the basic principles of them but as we've talked about Martha and Mary, I think there's a broader spiritual truth here. Martha's in the kitchen, Martha's working, Martha's dotting i's and crossing t's, Martha is kind of a legalist. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Martha is working, working, striving, striving, giving, giving. Do you know what Mary's doing? Receiving. I want that word to sink in. Mary just went in there and received. Now, some of you are not yet saved because you ran to Jesus and said, "Jesus, I want to do this for you. I want to do this for you. I want to do this. I'm going to work like this. I'm going to change this way." "Martha, Martha, you have to start like Mary." Now, I said earlier all of us need some Mary, communing with the Lord, we even commune while we're working and serving but communion is essential but all of us need some Martha, each man should carry his own load the Bible says, there's work to do in the Lord's work. But you absolutely must start being a Mary who comes to the feet of her Lord, the feet of her Savior and brings nothing, performs nothing, achieves nothing, works nothing, just receives. Then, after you've been to Jesus as a wicked sinner with nothing to bring but your sin and receive grace and mercy and forgiveness, then you begin serving him more like a Martha too but you've got to come as a Mary first.

Have you been there? Have you come bringing nothing, offering nothing, promising nothing, performing nothing, just to receive because, by the way, you can't bring him anything he wants. Anything you offer him is a filthy wickedness. Scripture says all of your righteous deeds are as filthy rags in his sight. You can only come to Jesus to receive mercy, to receive forgiveness, to receive pardon, to receive grace and because it's grace, it's completely, totally and absolutely free. It's free. You've got to receive first, then you serve later.

Let's just remain seated and pray, alright?