

# Preparing Ones Heart to Recieve the Truth (Incomplete)

by Rolfe Barnard

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*Rolfe Barnard emphasizes the critical need for individuals to prepare their hearts to receive God's truth for genuine spiritual transformation and salvation.*

**Duration:** 28:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:3-9, Matthew 13:18-23, James 1:18-27

**Topics:** "Truth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preparing one's heart to receive the word of God. He highlights the fact that many people attend church services without having their hearts truly prepared, resulting in a lack of spiritual growth. The preacher references James 1:19-21, where it is advised to sow to self-righteousness and break up the fallow ground in our hearts. He also mentions the parable of the sower and the seed, emphasizing the need for the right kind of ground to receive the seed and bear fruit. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the fundamental nature of preparing one's heart to receive God's truth.

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## Transcript

Ever wondered what to say, there's so much in the book. I hope that what I finally decided on is the mind of the Lord. At any rate, I want to speak very carefully as I can, tonight on the subject of preparing one's heart to receive God's truth.

Preparing your own heart to receive the engrafted word which is able to save the soul. Let's begin reading in the first chapter of James at, well, we'll begin with verse 16 of James chapter 1. Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will beget he us with the word truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Wherefore, listen to this carefully, if it be true that of God's own will, by the use and means of truth, we were born into the kingdom of God, how desperately we need to hear if we value our souls, this 19th verse. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Wherefore, he's exhorting now, he's advising now, he's speaking to us now. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Now, today I'm sure that we would not address someone whom we, using what wish we have about us and what spiritual discernment we have about us, we would say that person is not one of God's children yet, he's not been brought by faith in the Lord to God, we wouldn't address him as a brother, beloved brethren. But I'm persuaded that the early Jewish preachers, and James was a Jewish preacher, might so have addressed his fellow Hebrews in these terms, because they didn't mean that they believed they were in Christ. But they were fellow Jews.

Whether that be true or not, you notice here it says in verse 16, he addresses them as my beloved brethren. And he's talking to somebody that he loves, he calls them brother. I do believe, whether that's the right interpretation of this or not, that the words of James, there in verse 19, wherefore my beloved brethren, are excellent advice, form these words from 19 down through verse 21, three verses, in which we find some excellent advice from James to anyone who is not yet united to the Lord Jesus.

Here's three, by way of advice here, three things in these verses that are addressed to unsaved men and women who would prepare their hearts to receive what he calls in verse 21, the engrafted word. And he says that this engrafted word that is able to save your soul. Now, it may seem strange that the preacher would say that if anybody wishes to become vitally united to Christ, not just stand afar off and claim to believe in his atoning word, but to be united to Christ, for we definitely hold that you cannot have the merits of Christ's blood unless you have him, that you cannot separate him from what he did.

We believe with all of our hearts that multitudes of people honestly and earnestly are doing what they say, trusting in the shed blood of Christ, but they're not saved. Because we do not believe that unless you are regenerated you can participate in the merits of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And thus we say to men and women that if you would in these days of religious confusion where everybody has a gospel and everybody has a doctrine and everybody has six interpretations of those individual doctrines, and what I say is just what I say, and there's not much respect for what anybody says, that if you value your soul's welfare, you'll take seriously the injunction of the prophet James, the apostle James, to prepare your heart.

For unless your heart is prepared, and prepared by you, you will never receive the word savingly. Did you get it? You'll spend all the days of your life talking about how you believe in the word and how you trust him in the blood, but an unprepared heart cannot receive the word of truth. And the only way to be born of the spirit is by the incorruptible word of the living God.

And that introduces me to the biggest tragedy of my ministry as I go from place to place. I wonder if anybody gets saved because nobody's got time to prepare his heart. You didn't prepare your heart for whatever message the Lord would have for you tonight.

You didn't have time, did you? Did you? So it'll just bounce off of you, and it'll go in one ear and out the other. It won't be my fault. It won't be the fault of the word.

Your heart cannot receive truth unless it's been plowed, unless it's been prepared. Do you see it? That's so. I don't care if you're a Christian.

You don't get a thing out of anybody's divine service. I don't care what kind of service it is in these days because we don't have time, nor do we feel the necessity of plowing our own hearts and preparing our own hearts so that if the seed were to drop it'd fall on good ground. We're reminded, of course, in the book of Proverbs, chapter 16, verse 1, you can turn to it later if you want to, that the preparation of the heart's the work of God, aren't we? I'll tell you, I've got it marked.

The preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is where? Is from the Lord. But we're also told in the word of God, in Hosea, I also got that marked, so one takes so long to find it, soul to yourselves in righteousness. Now there's something that the sinner's addressed.

He said, now, God said, you over in Proverbs said this is the work of God. That's so. In Hosea, God tells the sinner to soul to yourselves in righteousness and if you do, you'll reap in mercy.

Break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek the Lord and you seek him till he come and reign righteousness upon you. Now, any spiritual truth that falls on bad ground doesn't bear fruit, does it? Isn't that right? In the 13th chapter of the book of Matthew, we are told plainly over and over again in those different parables, I'll not turn to them, but you remember them, the parable of the sower and the seed.

He went out and he sowed seed and the seed was good, nothing on earth. Wrong was the seed or the sowing of the seed. The trouble was that he sowed it on four kinds of ground and only one ground was prepared.

And so the seed fell on some ground and the fellow was gloriously converted. You remember how old Bill got gloriously converted. You remember about that, you know.

And he shouted and he just knocked the home run and he went down on the streets and he told everybody about how God saved him and two weeks later he folded up his tent and taken down the flag and taken out. You see, there was no root there, the scriptures say, and he flashed for a little while but because the seed didn't take root, is that right? First time a little windstorm of adversity came, he played out. He played out and on and on.

But there was one type of ground and one type of owner that had been thoroughly prepared. And this is interesting in view of the fact that James is inviting men and women, is giving some advice about how we are to hear, how we are to hear the word of God. And the book of Hosea will advise us to sow to our self-righteousness and to break up the foul ground in our own hearts.

Now somebody says, explain that. I don't have to. I didn't write them.

I'm not the author of the Bible. They say, well, I can't understand that. Well, that makes two of us.

There's very little in the life about us that we can understand. But thank God we can believe. Now, if any kind of spiritual truth comes your way, unless your heart has been prepared to receive truth, you can't receive it.

You can't receive it. It just can't be done. The truth just bounces off.

Bounces off. I was talking to a preacher in Texas the other day. And he said, Brother Barton, I can't understand.

I went through college, Baptist College. I went through seminary three years. I taught in one of our Baptist schools.

I pastored in our Baptist churches. I held evangelistic campaigns all over the West. Until two years ago, I had never seen anything in the Word of God about salvation by grace.

He says, now pick up my Bible. It's on every page. But until two and a half years ago, I'd read the same verses.

I'd study the same chapters. I'd preach out of the same books. And I'd read the verses.

And what the verses said just went in one ear and out the other. And he was not able to receive truth, even that preacher, until God had brought this thing and that thing and that thing and the other thing on its life, until he had a prepared heart. Now that's true of an unsaved person.

You didn't attend services until you're blue in the face and do what you call listen. But until you take seriously the fact that only by receiving the Word sufficiently until it takes root in here is any salvation produced. And that no seed will take root unless the heart's been prepared.

See what I said? That is tragic. My tragedy now as I go up and down the country, I get one person in the service one night. People go out and visit and ring doorbells.

And finally they get rid of some importunate church member, that old unsaved fellow. We'll do him a favor and he'll attend the meeting one night. But the next night he goes to the picture show or bowling or something, you see.

And the next night he goes somewhere else. And nothing happens. It's hearts, not plows.

This is fundamental. This is fundamental. Now James says in these verses, verse 19 through 21, he lays down three things.

That men who were interested in preparing their hearts so that they could receive the engrafted or the word that we'd understand a little better, especially if you're a farmer, the rootage word. The seed was sown and it took root. Is that right? You plant a grain of corn in the dirt and that's why it takes root.

Is that right? You plant a little sapling and it takes root. If you have a tree, it's got to go down first before it goes up. Isn't that right? And that's true in this business, salvation.

Sinners are not saved accidentally. And the fellows say, well now, the preacher tells me that the sinner can't save himself. That's right.

And the preacher tells me the sinner is helpless. That's right. But there are lots of things a lost man could do.

He could look at himself through God's law. There's not a lost man this side of hell that could be prevented, if he wanted to, from buying him a Bible. He can get at least a New Testament for a quarter, I guess, down at Woolworth's.

They don't get scoffed any more than that. He used to get one for a nickel or a dime. And nothing could keep a man from reading carefully what God says about him.

A man could do that, couldn't he? And a man could set himself to get him a pick and a shovel and start plowing his own heart. Nothing to keep a lost man from doing that, is it? Now, that wouldn't save him. But unless the sinner's heart becomes so that the seed will take root.

Now, he may make a profession. He may have some kind of experience. But unless the seed of the gospel takes root, it will not bear fruit.

And if you're not bearing fruit, you're not God's child. Is that all right? All right. So I'm interested, as I go up and down the country preaching to men and telling them what James says.

He says there's three things that an unsaved man ought to do if that unsaved man is interested in having a heart that can receive. The truth don't bounce off it. Some of it gets down in there.

See what I'm talking about? And these three things are first. The sinner must cease from rebellion against the word of truth. Look again at verse 18.

Of his own will, beget us with the what? Not apart from, but with the word of truth. Man's attitude toward truth must be changed. And there's no power on earth that could keep the vile sinner out of hell from making all the effort that a man can make.

That's all a man can do. Whatever's the best a man can do, that's the best he can do. But he could do that, couldn't he? And he could make an effort to cease from spiritual truth.

Look what James says about it. In view of the fact, did you get it yet? Of his own will, beget he us with the word of truth. Nor that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Wherefore? In view of the fact that men are born again of the Holy Spirit by the use of the truth of the gospel. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear. Let him clean out his ears.

Let him get the wax out of his ears. Let him spit on his hands. Let him roll up his sleeves.

Let him become aware. Let him be swift to hear. And cut out all this business of bucking the truth.

There are those when the gospel preached, they're not swift to hear. They don't make an effort to hear. Make an effort to hear.

Most everywhere I go, the problem of order in a church service is something. Most everywhere I go, most sun school teachers cannot get their youngsters quiet long enough to quote a verse of scripture. I'm telling you the truth.

Men are not keen to hear now. But in view of the fact that of his own will he begat us for the word of truth. James says, wherefore, let every man be what? Be swift to hear.

Be swift to hear. Well, nothing to keep you from hearing, is there? Except if you don't want to. Is there? And this word must be heard, and it must be heard, and not bought and received until it takes root.

That's right. If it don't, we'll just have another fellow that got converted and went on to hell. It's got to take root.

It's got to take root. People are swift, but they demount nothings against the truth of God. And to do it with a good eel of enmity, it looks like.

A lady rushed up to me the other day down in Texas. She was shaking. Her eyes were full of tears.

Her voice was choked. And she was in terrible shape. I didn't know who she was.

It turned out later that a preacher had warned her about what a terrible fellow I am and about my terrible doctrine, and warned her and told her not to come near me and preach. But she was a Sun School teacher and a member of the church, and she came on anyhow. But she was set there.

Not to hear. Not to hear. She wasn't swift to hear.

She came to resist whatever was said. Now if an unsaved man wants to be dead, sure he goes to hell instead of being swift to listen. Let him voice his ignorant mouthings and be in a hurry to show his wrath and his rebellion and his enmity against the truth of God.

This woman came and she was torn all to pieces. And I didn't know who she was. Later I learned.

And because I didn't know who she was, I think maybe the Lord helped me deal with her. Otherwise the flesh might have got in very gently. She rushed up to me and said, Brother, preacher said, I'm just torn all to pieces.

Said, you're tearing everything up I've ever heard. Said, all I've ever heard is against what you're preaching. And I said, well, I'm sorry to hear that.

I didn't know who she was. I said, what was it about the message tonight that disturbed you so? And she said, well, it was this morning and tonight. Said, I've just walked the floor all day since the morning service.

Said, I've never heard anything like that. Just torn me all to pieces. And said, my boy, she had an 18-year-old boy.

Said, he asked me to explain it. Said, I can't. And she was in desperate condition.

And I said, well, tell me. Tell me what it is. Maybe I'm wrong.

I'll listen. God knows I will. And she said, well, so and so.

And I said, well, you didn't quote all the verse. Well, she said, what is it? I said, you're the one that started it. You quote it from.

She said, I don't know. I don't even know where it's found in the Bible. See, she's awful well informed to be so torn up and be dead certain that what she's hearing was not so.

See, she came prepared not to believe the things she heard. She couldn't help it. She'd been warned.

Now, if there's a person here tonight that's not a Christian and you want to be dead sure you go to hell, you keep on closing your mind and refusing to be swift to hear the truth of God. I don't care if it comes from a donkey. You be swift not to rebel but to listen to God's truth.

See what I mean? Well, it turned out with the woman that she began to quote part of the scriptures and I said, yes, that's found in so and so but she didn't quote all of it. And we turned to it and read it and said, well, I never saw that, she said, never saw that. And then she said some of the things you said.

I said, well, do I have Bible? She said, I don't know. And I said, well, let's turn to some of the scriptures and we'll reread them again that I quoted and you tell me what you've got to find fault with what the scripture says. And we turned and read some of them and she said, I've never seen them in the scripture.

And I'm using that as an illustration. Don't be in such a big hurry to go frothing in the mouth if you can't even quote all the scripture you've heard from somebody. Be swift to hear and a little slower to rebel.

James says, Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, in view of what? Your verse 18, that we are forgotten, we're born of the Spirit through the word of truth. Now, I think that if you allow me, I think you will, I want to mention five great teachings of the word of God about which men rebel. Unsaved men will rebel against all five of these things or they'll rebel against any of them unless your heart has been prepared.

You'll keep on looking, keep on going. You hear some preacher make fun of them, you'll keep on looking. You'll make a profession, you'll go through the motions and you'll split hell wide open.

For only a prepared heart can take these five Bible teachings. You cannot but help rebel against what the Bible says about the kind of person you are. I'm telling you, when you pick up the word of God and start trying, just find out what it says about you and me.

Say, stick out your tongue. Let all those snakes come out. Look at your feet, they're swift to shed blood.

Just look at you, from your mother's womb you went about full of lies and hypocrisy. From the whole top of your head to the bottom of your feet, Isaiah says you're just one mass of putrefying sores. He says you're dumb, he says you haven't got as much sense as a donkey, he says the ass knows his master's crib, and you don't even know it.

That's what it says. Oh, if the Bible don't say some terrible things about us folks. And you can't take it, you'll rebel against it.

And you're going to keep on rebelling against it until you wind up in hell. Unless you make up your mind, you value your eternity by them so, and you get your block and tackle or pick and shovel and start preparing your heart. Asking God to enable some of the truth about yourself to sink in here and take root until you get a little alarmed and you get desperate to find out whether there's any hope for a fellow that's as big a sinner as you are.

You just can't take that, brother Elmer, apart from a prepared heart. Says your best righteousness is a filthy right. Says you drink iniquity like water.

You just lap it up. Said you're very plowing your sins. Said that your imagination is evil.

The thoughts of your heart are rotten. And if it could open up you, Adam, it would cover all of these filthy things. The Bible talks that way about men.

An unprepared heart above that shows you foot high, and yet you'll never be saved unless it's brought home to you what kind of person you are. Because being a human being from Adam's fallen race, you'll never be interested in a doctor as long as you've just got a headache. You're going to have to get plump sick before you start screaming for a doctor.

Be swift to hear what God says about Rothbard. If I'm preaching to nice people, it's a different thing, but I'm not preaching to nice people. I'm preaching to people who are born in sin, conceived in iniquity, and then you're a cesspool in a hotbed of rebellion against God.

You hate everything that's high and holy. If it were not for the restraining power of the Spirit of God and the influences of the gospel and carnal hell, this would be a man's house tonight. And you know it.

You're not nice people. You're ruined people. You're rebellious people.

You're stiff-necked people. And you don't like to be told it, and you're going to go to hell fighting it unless your heart is prepared to receive God's truth about yourself. There is another teaching of the Word of God that's wrapped up in this business of the need of a prepared heart, and men do not get saved apart from being confronted with the strictness and the severity of God's holy law.

Where no law is preached, there's no gospel preached, because the gospel can only be preached in the context of the holy law of God. And where men and women are not weakened by the utter strictness and the terrible severity of God's holy law, they'll never be interested, really, in having a part in the merits of the shed blood of the Redeemer dying on a cross. I know that's so.

And yet, I'm not talking to nice people tonight. All on God's earth I've got to do to an unsaved man is in the name of God tell him not to do something and he'll split hell wide open to do it. It's his nature.

All you've got to do with that little child sitting by you is say, You be dead, sir! You don't do so-and-so. And they'll do it if it kills them. It's in their nature.

They hate law. They hate restriction. That's right, isn't it? And yet, unless the man is confronted with and becomes swift to hear how terribly strict God's holy law is and how unutterably horribly severe his law is, they'll never be interested in the Lord Jesus Christ and only a prepared heart can receive that truth.

That's right. The rest of it will bounce off of you. It bounced off of me, brother, and I made out the same piece of cloth you are.

It'll bounce off of you. And yet, you've got to face it. You'd better become swift to hear how strict God's law is, how severe God's law is.

If it's as strict as the Bible says it is, you dead sure need a savior. If it's as severe as the Bible says it is, no matter how terrible it'll be, to go out and meet God in whose hands will be the penalty, and he'll bring its splash upon the backs of men and women who've broken his holy law. There's a third Bible truth that cannot be received except by a prepared heart, and that's the absoluteness of the sovereignty of God.

I don't mean the sovereignty of God. Everybody believes in the sovereignty of God now, but the absoluteness of it. We live in a day now when everybody accepts the Lord.

You know that? The wickedest men in town will brag on the Lord. That's right. Everybody accepts the Lord.

But that the Lord they accept has been stripped of his glory. If you think, when Khrushchev was premier, whatever he was, I don't know what the title was, secretary of the Communist Party, whatever it was, if you take him out of his office, he's a pretty likable sort of a fellow. And if you'll take Christ out of his office, people take him as their buddy-buddy.

All the Hollywood actors in the Lord, they're buddy-buddy.

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