

**James 1:17-27** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup> Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. <sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. <sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. <sup>25</sup> But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. <sup>26</sup> If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

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The patient's heartbeat slows to a dangerously low rate. The doctor quickly determines that something must be done to restore this person's heart rate to a more normal beat. He schedules the surgery and implants directly below the surface of the skin a pacemaker and places its lead into the heart itself. Suddenly, almost miraculously, the heart rate returns to normal and health is restored.

Several months later, the patient's heart continues to beat just perfectly. They don't even think about it on a day to day basis. They don't think about the fact that something implanted into their body is keeping them alive in a very real sense. It is just doing its life sustaining work.

James wrote in our text by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

Yes, the implanted word, able to save one's soul. When implanted, it keeps one spiritually alive. And what exactly is this faithmaker? Put simply, it is the words of Jesus implanted into us to sustain our spiritual life.

No one gets a pacemaker because they are well. It is not some sort of novelty. But rather it is something given to someone who would likely die without it.

So also, the word of Christ is not implanted to the well of soul. Rather, it is given to us humans who would die without it. Our sin has robbed us completely of our health and our only hope for life is that someone or something outside of ourselves might come into us and keep us alive. We cannot save ourselves. We are in

critical condition. That is why James says that we must receive this implanted word with meekness, for we do not deserve it. We do not receive it because we are well, but rather because we are near death.

And so in the waters of Baptism God implants his word into us. Today, it was implanted into Elizabeth. Her sin-sick soul was rescued from certain death and brought back to life. That is the miracle of having a faithmaker implanted. That is the miracle of having Jesus' words dwelling inside an otherwise doomed human.

And much like a pacemaker, the faithmaker continues its work so long as it remains inside of us. As we go about our lives each day in the community of God's saints, the implanted word keeps us alive spiritually. It is powered throughout our lives as we hear the words of God and as we receive the Incarnate Word Jesus himself in his Supper. Yes, through these means, God keeps the implanted word working in us and causes our spiritual hearts to beat regularly with good works and a strong faith.

The faithmaker's work is so constant that as we remain in the presence of God and the community of his saints, sometimes we don't even think consciously about the presence of the faithmaker inside of us. But all along, whether we are thinking about it or not thinking about it, it is the source of our health. It is the very reason we are spiritually alive.

Anyone with a pacemaker knows in order for the device to operate properly certain things must be avoided. Strong microwave rays can cause trouble. MRIs can destroy the pacemaker's ability to work properly.

So also James reminds us today that those of us with a faithmaker implanted into us must also avoid those things which can cause the implanted word to not be able to function properly in our lives as well.

He tells us to put aside all filthiness and rampant wickedness. To rephrase even more simply, James reminds us that the faithmaker cannot function properly around sin.

And so those of us with the Word of Christ implanted into us pray to our Heavenly Father "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." We ask God that He would remove those things from us which can disturb the sound function of our faithmaker. We ask that he would take anything away from us that would cause it not to function properly. And instead, we surround ourselves with God's Word, His Supper, and His people of faith.

For the instructional book that comes along with the faithmaker reminds us that the faithmaker does not work well around objects of lust or idols, whatever they are made of. It cannot function in the midst of anger or unforgiven sin. It cannot operate around false teaching or soul sapping apathy. And so we pray daily that God indeed would lead us away from temptation and from all evil.

And since we recognize how this faithmaker keeps running inside of us, we also pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” Yes, we understand that in the coming of God’s kingdom the implanted word is kept functioning in us. And so we rejoice at the ways in which God’s kingdom comes to us, whether that be in words or water, bread or wine. And we look forward to the day when we will no longer need a faithmaker implanted inside of us because we will instead live in the presence of life himself, Jesus Christ, forever in heaven.

But until that day we rejoice knowing that as this implanted word dwells within us and those things that could cause it to malfunction are removed through confession, we can live as God’s people as doers of His Word and not simply hearers.

Many people throughout time and still today have heard the Word of Christ and yet refused to let it be implanted in them. This is the type of hearing that unbelief fosters. But faith receives the word it hears in the scriptures and the word incarnate that it receives in the Lord’s Supper and implants it deep inside of us to remain.

And that implanted word makes our religion that which is pleasing to the Lord, the kind of religion that watches over the oppressed and remains unstained from the filth of the world.

Everyone here today who believes and who has been baptized into Christ Jesus has this Word implanted into them. And it is good that we would be reminded of this truth today. The implanted word is not just something for Elizabeth’s family to rejoice in today, but it is a gift that we are blessed to rejoice in and mediate upon each day in our lives.

Otherwise we can be tempted to simply live as the sick and dying do. We can be tempted to lie down in our sins and accomplish nothing. We can go on looking like those who are being destroyed by sin.

But today as the Spirit reminds us again of the implanted word that we have, we realize that we can live as God have made us to be, spiritually alive and healthy by God’s grace. We can leave the hospital bed behind

and get back to the life that God has graciously given us to live. We can more than conqueror because the words of the conqueror Christ dwell within us.

Yes, as James says, every good gift comes down from Father of lights. This is true of pacemakers that keep human hearts beating. But even more to the point, it is true of the faithmaker, the implanted word, that dwells inside of us.

We have this gift inside of us keeping us alive each and every day. It is the thing that makes us able to be doers of the word and to have true religion that looks after the oppressed and remains unstained from the world's sinful desires.

Don't leave here today and forget who you are and what it is that dwells inside of you. It is those words that dwell inside of you that keep you alive day by day by connecting you to Jesus' death and resurrection. He has destroyed death by dieing on the cross and rising three days later.

And he gives you that victory by implanting his word deep inside of you through water and words, bread and wine. By his grace, your spiritual heart today that was as good as dead now beats in rhythm with God's perfect will. You have the faithmaker. You are alive. Amen.