

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 3RD-4TH, 2022 // BOOK OF JAMES

SLOW TO SPEAK (JAMES 1:19-21)

James has just talked about the importance of endurance and patience as we go through trials and temptations as believers (vs. 2-18).

- One of the things necessary to patiently endure during trials and temptations is for us to have the wisdom of God (vs. 5).
- We receive God's wisdom through asking Him in faith, but we also receive wisdom from God's Word (Psalm 19:7).

When it comes to us receiving God's wisdom, self-deception can be a huge problem (vs. 22, 26).

- There are many spiritually immature believers fooling themselves into thinking they're spiritual when they're really not.
- The reason many Christians don't grow spiritually is because they don't truly hear God's Word because they aren't receiving God's truth into their hearts with humility.

"BE QUICK TO LISTEN..." (VS. 19A)

We are to be eager, humble, and willing to receive God's wisdom and truth from His Word for ourselves first.

- Being "quick to listen" implies expectancy and sensitivity to God's voice and direction through His Word and Holy Spirit.
- Being quick to hear what God has to say means we must be willing to shut up first.

"...SLOW TO SPEAK..." (VS. 19B)

"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion" (Prov. 18:2).

- The only thing a know-it-all doesn't know is that nobody likes or listens to a know-it-all.
- We should be exceptionally cautious about trying to preach and teach everyone else until we've first heard, understood, and applied the message of God's Word to our own lives.

"...SLOW TO ANGER..." (VS. 19C)

We can't truly hear God's wisdom and truth when we're easily offended and quick to feel hostile, bitter feelings toward other people.

- If we're being led by our anger toward other people, not only will our spiritual hearing be diminished, but it will also be distorted.
- We'll weaponize God's Word and use it against those we see as our enemies.

HUMAN ANGER (VS. 20)

When out of our anger, hostility, and hatred, we take God's truth and use it like a club to beat people with, the results that God desires don't come.

- Our anger doesn't accomplish the righteous purposes of God—it simply defends or promotes our own agenda.
- "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4).

"...RIDDING YOURSELF OF ALL MORAL FILTH..." (VS. 21A)

If we're going to truly hear God's wisdom and truth from His Word, it's important for us to prepare our hearts to receive.

- "Moral filth" and "evil that is prevalent" gives a picture of a messy, cluttered room or a garden overgrown with weeds and littered with trash.
- If we want to hear God's Word, we've got to get honest about the nastiness of our own hearts and confess it to the Lord and repent of it.

"...HUMBLY RECEIVE THE IMPLANTED WORD..." (VS. 21B)

We receive God's Word humbly—with a teachable, hungry, and trusting heart.

- God's Word is able to save our souls, both in our current situation and eternally (because it points us to Christ).
- To receive God's word with humility means to accept it as truth—not arguing with or twisting it to conform to our thinking—but to simply receive it at face value.

DOERS OF THE WORD (JAMES 1:22-25)

James doesn't just tell us to "do" what the Word says; he tells us to become a "doer" (vs. 22a).

- A "doer" of God's Word is someone whose entire lifestyle is characterized by daily, continual obedience to God.
- A "doer" is someone whose lifestyle is characterized by action—not just talk.
- Obedience to God is not simply a one-time decision: It's an everyday way of living.

A common self-deception is for a person to believe that they can hear God's Word regularly and have spiritual life in them just by proxy.

- We can "amen" and nod heartily along with the truth of God's Word, but if we're not actually doing what it says, we're deceiving ourselves (vs. 22b).
- Being a "hearer" but not a "doer" is an indicator of an odd spiritual condition.

SPIRITUAL AMNESIA (VS. 23-24)

Those who only hear God's Word without doing what it says are like people who check their face in https://ecc-creativeworkspace.slack.com/files/U01KX1W4V08/F04DPG66KFS/universalfbbooklet_7-2-22.pdf?origin_team=TSYMKRJKD&origin_channel=D02FW95SNLQ n a mirror and then walk away with little memory of what it is they saw.

- Like a mirror, God's Word reflects back to us the reality of our true condition and tells us we need to change, repent, and walk in humble obedience before God.

But some of us have a quick glance into God's Word, find some truth that calls out an area of our life that needs to change, and then we quickly jump to another task without remembering or applying what we just heard or read.

- We think that simply seeing truth in God's Word is the same as obeying truth—and it's not.

"...THE ONE WHO LOOKS INTENTLY INTO THE PERFECT LAW OF FREEDOM" (VS. 25A)

To "look intently" means to examine thoroughly, or to bend over and get in close for a better look (John 20:5).

- In the New Covenant, God reveals to us a law, but it's the law of freedom written on our transformed hearts by the Spirit of God.
- Obedience to it brings about freedom in our lives.

"...AND PERSEVERES IN IT...IS NOT A FORGETFUL HEARER..." (VS. 25B)

How do we make sure we're not a "forgetful hearer" who suffers from spiritual amnesia as a "hearer only," but not a doer? We persevere in it.

- To persevere in God's Word is to actually apply the truths of Scripture to our lives and follow through with commitment and consistency.

"...THIS PERSON WILL BE BLESSED..." (VS. 25C)

Obedient people are always promised blessings from God (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).

- Our blessings may not look like material wealth or prosperity, but they are much richer, eternal, and more fulfilling than the things of this earth.
- Psalm 1:1-3 summarizes the blessings of obedience: "...like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season..."

PURE & UNDEFILED RELIGION (JAMES 1:26-27)

There are some who might consider themselves to be deeply spiritual, but ultimately, they're not truly listening to God's Word.

- These are people who are self-deceived: It doesn't matter how religious you think you are if God's Word isn't being received with sincere humility in your life.

Pure "religion" (outward, visible spiritual loyalty to God) is shown not by just hearing the Word, talking a lot about what we claim to know, and going to religious services: It's shown by actually doing what the Word says.

- One way we can obey God's Word is to control our tongues.
- The words we speak reveal the true state of our hearts (Matthew 12:34-35).

EVEN IF WE CLAIM TO BE DEEPLY SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS, IF WE SPEAK WORDS THAT ARE...

Self-exalting and boastful, it shows that in our hearts, we're holding onto pride.

- Accusatory, hurtful, slanderous, gossipy, and condemning, it shows that in our hearts, we're full of envy, jealousy, or hatred.
- Impure and crass, it shows that in our hearts, we're holding onto filth and immorality.

Those who have no control over their tongue (even if they think or claim to be religious) are self-deceived and have a religion that is useless (vs. 26).

- Your religion is absolutely useless if your walk with God doesn't translate into the way you live and the way you treat and speak to other people.
- It's useless because it doesn't please God and it's useless because it doesn't point people to God.

But there is a way we can practice our outward, spiritual loyalty to God that's pure and not defiled by our own sin and self-deception.

- A real walk with God that's pure expresses itself in very simple, practical ways.
- It does less talking and more doing.
- It does less advertising and more action.
- It does less lecturing and more modeling.
- It looks a lot like the life of Jesus.

1. HELPING THE NEEDY (VS. 27A)

If we look intently into God's perfect Word, we will see how seriously He takes our responsibility of caring for the needy and the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40-45).

- "Looking after widows and orphans in their distress" is a blanket term to describe our role as followers of Jesus in caring for those who are poor, voiceless, oppressed, needy, or helpless.

If we talk about how spiritual and religious we are, but we do nothing to actually help those Jesus has called us to help, we're self-deceived and haven't truly heard His Word.

- But if we will actively concern ourselves with looking after those who are in need with genuine compassion, that pleases God and is a pure expression of our loyalty to Him.

2. KEEPING OURSELVES UNSTAINED BY THE WORLD'S CORRUPTION (VS. 27B)

Pleasing God and practicing pure religion is not just being a social activist or a generous, benevolent person.

- It's also choosing to live a life of genuine purity and holiness amidst a corrupt, broken, and sin-filled world.
- This is more than just talk; it's a lifestyle.

"WHOEVER HAS EARS, LET THEM HEAR..." (MATTHEW 13:9).

- Jesus compares God's Word to a seed and the human heart to soil.
- Some seed fell on the path, where birds came and devoured the seed.
- Some seed fell on rocky ground, but there was no depth, and they withered away.
- Some seed fell on thorns, where the thorns grew up and choked out the seed.
- Seed on the path: the hardened heart. Someone who hears but doesn't understand, and the evil comes and snatches away the truth.
- Seed on rocky ground: the shallow heart. Someone who receives with a great emotional response, but ultimately has no depth and no root to their faith, so they fall away when it gets difficult to obey God's Word.
- Seed among the thorns: the crowded heart. The cares of this world, money, entertainment, popularity, and other pursuits choke out obedience to God's Word.
- Seed that fell upon good soil: the humble, receptive heart. Those who hear God's Word and seek to understand it by applying it and doing what it says.
- "...what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

THREE QUESTIONS...

- How's the soil of your heart?
- Where's the fruit in your life?
- What will you do with what we just read?