

JAMES 1: 22-27

- 22 But prove yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
- 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a **doer**, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;
- 24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.
- 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an **effectual doer**, this man shall be blessed in what he does.
- 26 If anyone thinks himself to be **religious**, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's **religion** is worthless.
- 27 This is pure and undefiled **religion** in the sight of *our* God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

INTRO

I might offend you today, for this message is sure to “step on a lot of toes.” Yet, a brother told me recently a good sermon is one that makes him respond “ouch, I needed that!”

RELIGION vs. RELIGIOUSITY

Religion: The service and worship of God or the supernatural. A life view that includes a supernatural higher power that influences your life.

Religious: devoted to the divine or that which is held to be of utmost importance

Religiosity: – excessively, obtrusively or pompously religious (like the Pharisees)

James begins with a concern that there are those whose religion is HEARING, and by implication BELIEVING and FUNCTIONING as religious, and yet are not living out their faith in actions consistent with their BELIEFS.

Certainly, this would describe non-believers, or seekers, who have not yet encountered the Christ who will indwell and change them.

Yet – James is writing to Jews who are brothers – already devoted followers of Jesus.

So, James is concerned with WE WHO ARE CHRISTIANS and yet have a DISCONNECT with what we HEAR and BELIEVE and what we DO ABOUT IT

Examples:

1. We hear and believe that the Bible is our source of spiritual growth. Do we devour it?

2. We hear and believe that prayer is our conduit to God and that God answers prayer?
Are we constantly knocking at His door?
3. We hear and read that the church is the bride of Christ and nothing on earth is more precious to him than His bride, the church. Do we love the church as Christ does?
4. We hear and believe that God wants us to give 10% of all we receive to His “storehouse” the church, that he might bless us abundantly. Do we do it?
5. We hear and believe that God considers us as His ambassadors to this world, wanting us to be active light and salt in sharing God with others. Are we fulfilling our “marching orders?”
6. LAST WEEK: We hear and read that “anger does not achieve the righteousness of God.” Do our actions show that we have put this spiritual danger to rest?

James warns us that there is serious DISCONNECT between what we HEAR and BELIEVE and our ACTIONS that demonstrate our religious devotion. He even calls us DELUSIONAL in our religion when this is so (v.22) – we are “kidding” ourselves. Or, as he says in v. 26, we are “deceiving our own heart”

The 2 lookers into the mirror

1. (v. 23-24) **LOOKER #1:** Looks casually (implied), sees himself as needy, but looks away forgetting to attend to the need, thus still bound by the need (implied)
APPLICATION: God’s word is heard regarding a spiritual need; the hearer is casually aware that he has need to change but does nothing to act on change and remains with the same need as before.

Ex. of “Fonzie” in the mirror. Ex. of my disheveled hair (mess it up good!!)

2. (v. 25) **LOOKER #2:** Looks intently, sees himself as needy and able to be freed from the need, acts effectively on the need, and thus is blessed in his actions
APPLICATION: God’s word is heard and listened to so as to convict and enact action resulting in real change, and thus victory and blessing in that area of need

3 Dimensional Religion – according to James

1. re: our **TONGUE** - control it (v. 26)
2. re: our **HANDS and FEET** – go to serve the needy (v. 27a)
3. re: our **HEART** – keep it pure from the world (v. 27b)

James 1: 22-29 (My paraphrase)

22. It is delusional to think that you are religious by merely hearing the Word, believing it, and participating in a few religious activities. Rather, you prove and demonstrate your true religion by living out the Word actively in every area of your life.

23-24. Hearing the Word and not doing it is like looking at yourself in a mirror and not fixing what needs fixing. Why even look if you just go away unchanged and oblivious to the need?

25. God's Word is the perfect rulebook for life, with rules to set you free, not tie you down, and therefore worthy of a long and hard look. If you let them sink in, and turn your thinking into meaningful action and change, your life will surely be blessed for it.

26. Do you think that your religion is healthy? Then put it to the test by whether you can control your tongue. If you can't, not only is your religion worthless but you're deceiving yourself into thinking your religion is OK. It's not.

27. I'll tell you what real religion is about. It's about practicing love and care for those with special needs – like children without parents or women who have lost their husbands. Bottom line, true religion is keeping yourself pure from the wickedness of the world!

JAMES, Chapter 1 (Pastor Craig's Paraphrase) 11.23.08

1. To my Jewish brothers of all twelve tribes, wherever you might be after having been forced out of your homeland – this letter is from James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ by calling and by choice. Dear brothers:

Confidence in Trials

2-4. Take a different perspective at the many trials you face, seeing the positive in them, rather than the negative. One, your faith is being proven and strengthened. And two, you are developing endurance for the long haul of life. Don't balk at being tested, but hang in there, letting each test accomplish its Godly purpose: your maturity, that you may be spiritually "buff" without flabbiness or weakness of character.

5. Remember, if you need wisdom (and who doesn't?), just ask God, who gives it abundantly and without making you feel bad for asking. Just ask, and Godly wisdom will indeed be given to you.

6-8. But you have to ask really believing the answer will come. No doubting allowed! Because if you doubt, you are acting just like the waves of the sea blown around by the wind – up one minute with your belief and down the next with your doubts. This kind of supposed "faith" won't get you anything from God. He doesn't accept on-again, off-again faith which, by the way, indicates instability in other areas of life.

Confidence in Status

9-10. Hey, believing brother - how about this for God's "upside down" perspective on wisdom? If your earthly status is on the "humble" side, be proud that you are standing rich and tall in God's spiritual kingdom. And if your earthly status is on the "well off" side, be proud that in God's kingdom you are just a spiritual beggar. After all, your earthly status is about as secure as flowering grass in the heat of the sun.

11. See the picture? Just like the sun rises, so does your status. Then comes the "Santa Annas" of life – and just like the grass withers and the flower falls, so does your

status. What once appeared beautiful is no more. Our status, and the futile pursuits of achieving it, will soon fade away.

12. So what's worth achieving? - persevering through the trials of life and proving your Godly character through it all. This is how you will receive the true "crown of life" – God's heavenly reward – which He promises to each one of His lovers.

Confidence in Temptation

13-16. I don't ever want to hear you saying, "I am being tempted by God." One, evil can never tempt a perfect God. And two, a perfect God could never lower Himself to tempt any one. Rather, it's really you that brings on temptation by your own luring lustfulness. Sin comes when you give in to temptation by acting on your lust. And when that sin gets full sway in your life it kills your relationship with God. My dear, believing friends whom I love - don't be sucked in by temptation!

17. Everything that is good is a perfect gift, especially given to you by God. "Good" is never by accident. The Giver is always our Heavenly Father, and like a bright light he never wavers or compromises in His delivery of good.

18. God exercised His Divine prerogative when He chose to pull us into the Truth by the power of His Word. This was so that we Jewish believers could be considered as the first ones to receive His special blessing of spiritual victory.

Confidence in Reaction

19-20. Now I'm going to tell you something you already know, but you must apply it to your reactions. One, be quick to listen to others and especially to God. Two, be slow to voice your opinion. And three, put any tendency to anger on a slow fuse. Pleasing God and getting angry never go well together. The short version: open your ears, close your mouth and chill your anger.

21. You know all that leftover filth of the old life that's still seeps out? Dump it in the spiritual trash can. You know God's Word that He has planted deep inside of you? Humbly receive its wisdom and let it save you from drowning in your own foolish reactions.

Confidence in Religion

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