

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

THE PREPARATION TO RECEIVE GOD’S WORD - JAMES 1:19-21

1. REVIEW

A. A BRIEF SUMMARY OF JAMES 1:2-18

1. IN CHAPTER 1, JAMES ARGUED THAT WHEN FAITH IS PUT TO THE TEST IT CAN PRODUCE GENUINE STABILITY. TO DEMONSTRATE THIS POINT, HE GAVE TWO EXAMPLES.

a. FIRST, HE ARGUED THAT THE NORMAL TRIALS OF LIFE DON’T CRUSH GENUINE FAITH... THEY PRODUCE ENDURANCE (1:1-12).

b. SECOND, HE URGED HIS READERS TO OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS TO SIN BY RELYING ON GOD-GIVEN STRENGTH (1:13-18).

B. IN DEVELOPING HIS MAIN THEME THAT REAL FAITH PRODUCES GENUINE WORKS JAMES DISCUSSES:

1. THE CHRISTIAN’S PERSEVERANCE THROUGH TRIALS,

a. WHICH PROVES OUR FAITH (1:1-12),

2. AND THE BELIEVER’S VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION,

a. WHICH DEMONSTRATES OUR CHARACTER (1:13-18).

3. IN THIS FINAL SECTION OF CHAPTER 1, JAMES’ EMPHASIS IS ON THE BELIEVER’S APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD.

a. THE BREAK IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR MAY BE PANDEMIC AMONG CHRISTIANS, BUT JAMES REMINDS US THAT THE TWO ESTRANGED PARTNERS OF THE CHRISTIAN WALK (BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR) CAN BE RECONCILED.

C. James 1:19-27 (TLB) Dear brothers, don't ever forget that it is best to listen much, speak little, and not become angry; for anger doesn't make us good, as God demands that we must be. So get rid of all that is wrong in your life, both inside and outside, and humbly be glad for the wonderful message we have received, for it is able to save our souls as it takes hold of our hearts. And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. So don't fool

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yourselves. For if a person just listens and doesn't obey, he is like a man looking at his face in a mirror; as soon as he walks away, he can't see himself anymore or remember what he looks like. But if anyone keeps looking steadily into God's law for free men, he will not only remember it but he will do what it says, and God will greatly bless him in everything he does. Anyone who says he is a Christian but doesn't control his sharp tongue is just fooling himself, and his religion isn't worth much. The Christian who is pure and without fault, from God the Father's point of view, is the one who takes care of orphans and widows, and who remains true to the Lord — not soiled and dirtied by his contacts with the world.

D. **James 1:19-27 (NASB)** *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 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; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 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 will be blessed in what he does. 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. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

2. **INTRODUCTION: TODAY WE’RE GOING TO DISCUSS THE DELICATE SUBJECT OF DIVORCE.... NOT A DIVORCE BETWEEN A HUSBAND AND WIFE THAT OCCURS IN A HOME. BUT... A DIVORCE THAT OCCURS IN THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER BETWEEN THE TRUTH THAT IS HEARD... BUT IS NOT LIVED. THIS DIVORCE IS A RADICAL SEPARATION BETWEEN THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. THE REASON FOR THIS DIVORCE IS NOT RELATIONAL INCOMPATIBILITY. IT IS A**

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MATTER OF **PERSONAL INCONSISTENCY** THAT IS CARRIED OUT IN **PUBLIC** FOR ALL TO **SEE**.

A. FOR MANY OF US CHRISTIANS, **GOD’S WORD FAILS** TO **MAKE IT FROM** OUR **HEAD** TO OUR **HEART**.

B. AND FOR MANY MORE OF US, HIS **WORD** GETS **STUCK** BETWEEN OUR **HEART** AND OUR **HANDS**.

C. TO A CASUAL **OBSERVER** IT APPEARS THAT MANY **CHRISTIANS** WANT TO **ENJOY THE THRILL OF FEELING RIGHT** BUT ARE **NOT WILLING TO ENDURE** THE **INCONVENIENCE OF LIVING RIGHT**.

1. SO THERE IS A **DIVORCE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE!**

D. IN THE FINAL SECTION OF CHAPTER 1, **JAMES’ EMPHASIS** IS ON THE **BELIEVER’S APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD**.

3. **James 1:19-20 (NASB)** *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

A. **JAMES BEGINS** THIS SECTION WITH “*This you know, my beloved brethren.*”

1. “**YOU KNOW**” IS A **REMINDER**... AS WELL AS A **REBUKE**... = “**YOU’VE FORGOTTEN!**”

B. **THREE THINGS** THAT JAMES SAYS **MUST BE “REMEMBERED”** IN **PREPARATION TO RECEIVE GOD’S WORD**:

1. **FIRST**... JAMES URGES US TO BE “**quick to hear**”.

a. THE **IDEA** HERE IS **MORE THAN JUST HEARING**... IT IS **LISTENING INTENTLY**.

1) JAMES WANTS US TO **GENUINELY RECEIVE** THE **WORDS** THAT ARE WRITTEN.

2) AS IN THERE ARE **TWO WAYS OF READING A BOOK**.

i. TO GET **THROUGH IT**.

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ii. TO READ FOR COMPREHENSION.

- 3) Matthew 13:13-14a (NASB) "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and **while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand**. "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, '**YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND**;
- 4) Matthew 13:20-23 (NASB) "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who **hears the word** and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* **temporary**, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who **hears the word**, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes **unfruitful**. "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who **hears the word and understands it**; who indeed bears **fruit** and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

b. DISCUSS THE WAY MANY OF US READ THE "ONE YEAR BIBLE".

1) TO CHECK THAT DAY OFF OUR LIST.

2. SECOND... TO RECEIVE GOD’S WORD EFFECTIVELY ALSO INCLUDES BEING "slow to speak".

a. PUTTING A DAMPER ON OUR TONGUE IS THE OTHER SIDE OF LISTENING.

b. KEEPING OUR MOUTHS CLOSED MAKES ROOM FOR THINKING, PONDERING, MEDITATING, AND CONSIDERING—ALL THE ELEMENTS NECESSARY FOR TRUE LISTENING = UNDERSTANDING.

1) IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO LISTEN WHILE WE ARE TALKING!

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- 2) TOO MANY OF US TALK TOO MUCH AND THEREFORE ARE NOT ABLE TO “HEAR” WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING.
 - 3) THE ARMED SERVICES DO AN EXCELENT JOB OF TEACHING THEIR MEMBERS TO “LISTEN”.
3. THIRD... “slow to anger”
- a. IN THE GREEK THERE IS NO “and” BETWEEN “slow to speak and slow to anger”
 - 1) = “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” ARE SO CLOSELY RELATED TO THE PRECONDITION FOR RECEIVING GOD’S WORD THAT JAMES CONCEIVES OF THEM AS BEING CONNECTED LIKE LINKS IN A CHAIN.
 - b. WHY DID JAMES INCLUDE “ANGER” IN THIS LIST?
 - 1) PAUL WROTE, “ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD AND PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS” (2 TIM. 3:16).
 - 2) WHEN GOD’S WORD HITS TOO CLOSE TO HOME, WE OFTEN REACT WITH DEFENSIVENESS, INDIGNATION, AND EVEN ANGER.
 - 3) WE DO NOT LIKE HAVING OUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS BEING HELD UP TO A PERFECT STANDARD. BUT THAT’S JUST WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE LET GOD’S WORD EXPOSE OUR INNERMOST THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.
 - 4) Hebrews 4:12 (NASB) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - i. GOD’S WORD IS ABLE TO GO WHERE NO SURGEON’S SCALPEL CAN EVER GO!

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- 5) **INSTEAD** OF ALLOWING THE TYPICAL **RESPONSE** OF **ANGER**, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH WHAT GOD’S WORD SAYS, JAMES CALLS US TO **RESPOND IN PEACE**, “for the **anger** of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” (**James 1:20**).
 - 6) **ANGER REJECTS** REBUKE; **PEACE ACCEPTS** REBUKE.
 - i. **ANGER DISMISSES** CORRECTION; **PEACE EMBRACES** CORRECTION.
4. **James 1:21 (NASB)** Therefore, putting aside all **filthiness** and *all* that remains of **wickedness**, in humility **receive** the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
- A. **James 1:21 (TLB)** “So get rid of all that is wrong in your life, both inside and outside, and humbly **be glad for the wonderful message we have received**, for it is able to save our souls as it takes hold of our hearts.”
 - B. **WHEN WE HAVE PREPARED TO RECEIVE GOD’S WORD (THE TRUTH) BY LISTENING** (OPENING THE EARS OF THE HEART), **ZIPPING OUR LIPS**, AND SUPPRESSING THE URGE TO STRIKE BACK IN **ANGER** (1:19-20), THEN WE ARE **READY** TO PROPERLY **RECEIVE** THE **TRUTH** OF GOD’S WORD (1:21).
 - C. IN THE **CENTER** OF THIS SHORT VERSE IS A SIMPLE **COMMAND** THAT **TIES** THE WHOLE **SECTION TOGETHER**: “**RECEIVE**” (**DECHOMAI**).
 1. THE WORD “**RECEIVE**” USUALLY MEANS **MORE** THAN TO **PASSIVELY “ACCEPT.”**
 - a. IT OFTEN INCLUDES THE IDEA OF **FULLY EMBRACING**, AND MAKING THE THING **PART OF ONESELF**.
 - 1) **Acts 17:10-12 (NASB)** The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for **they received the word with great eagerness**, examining the Scriptures daily *to see*

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whether these things were so. **Therefore many of them believed,** along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

- b. JAMES DESCRIBES THE **CONDITIONS** THAT **MUST ACCOMPANY** THE **RECEPTION OF GOD’S WORD**: “putting aside all **filthiness** and *all* that remains of **wickedness**, in **humility...**” (NASB) ... “So **get rid of all that is wrong in your life**, both **inside** and **outside**, and **humbly be glad for the wonderful message we have received**” (NLT)

- 1) **FILTHINESS** IN LIFE **PLUGS OUR HEARING**.
- 2) **WICKEDNESS** **SLOWS OUR RESPONSE TIME**.
- 3) **PRIDE** (IN CONTRAST TO “**HUMILITY**”) **KEEPS US** FROM **EXPOSING OURSELVES TO THE LIGHT OF THE WORD**.
- 4) **BUT... “HUMILITY” MEANS SUBMITTING TO WHATEVER GOD’S WORD HAS TO SAY TO US**.

5. **James 1:21** (NASB) Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in **humility receive the word implanted**, which is able to save **your souls**.

- A. JAMES’S **PROGRESSION OF PREPARING FOR, RECEIVING, AND RESPONDING TO THE TRUTH IS SIMPLE AND ELEGANT...** IT RELATES TO **FARMING...** SEE **Luke 8:11-15** (NASB) "Now the parable is this: the **seed** is the word of God. "Those **beside the road** are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. "Those on the **rocky soil** are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. "The **seed** which fell among the **thorns**, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. "But the **seed** in the **good soil**, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear **fruit** with perseverance.:

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1. **FIRST**, JAMES SAYS THAT THE **SOIL** OF OUR **SOULS** SHOULD BE **PREPARED** ... **James 1:19-20 (NASB)** This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be **quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger**; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.
2. **SECOND**, THE **SEED** OF **TRUTH** MUST BE **PLANTED**... **James 1:21 (NASB)** Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility **receive the word implanted**, which is able to save your souls.
3. **THIRD**, THE **WEEDS** OF **ANGER, FILTH, AND WICKEDNESS** MUST BE **UPROOTED**... **James 1:20-21a (NASB)** for the **anger** of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all **filthiness** and *all* that remains of **wickedness**,
4. **HOWEVER**, HAVING GOTTEN THIS FAR IN THE **PROCESS**, **GOD’S WORD** STILL HAS **NOT BORNE FRUIT** IN OUR LIVES.
 - a. THIS REQUIRES A **PROPER RESPONSE**
 - b. THE **PROPER RESPONSE** TO **GOD’S WORD** IS FOUND IN **James 1:22-27** WHICH WE WILL COVER NEXT WEEK.