

JAMES 1:21-27

Those Born By The Word

When a baby is born, we all try to figure out who he/'she looks like. As the child grows it may become clearer, not just in looks, but in behavior

v. 18-20

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all [w]that remains of wickedness, in [w]humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

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 [x]natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, [w]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 [z]an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in [aa]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.

James is giving advice that follows from the command – v. 16 Do Not be deceived. He is very concerned v. 16, 22, 26 about self-deception. It is the most dangerous form of deception.

Warnings in scripture are expressions of God's mercy.

It is also a command with a promise for all DOERS.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE BORN BY THE WORD

- 1. Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger v 19 – these reflect the character of God – Ps 103**
- 2. Is concerned for the righteousness of God v 20 – the character of God is at the heart of this**

(Eph 4) Proper anger is good, but here is a cancerous anger. How to tell if it is bad? -it is quick, flares up in a second. - leads to evil i.e. opposite of righteousness. Good anger can help you do what is right

EX: Harrison Ford- Movie, FRANTIC, he controls anger, no natural nerves of steel, but gets angry well- when he sees evil, the anger helps him do what is right, defend what needs to be defended. When the anger flares up and leads to what you regret you know it is from a bad source This is common to see in our lives

In short, James says use the gospel on your pride and anger. If you aren't humble with others, can't relax when you fail, can't take criticism, can't admit sin, you'll get nothing from the Word. We need to listen, study, memorize etc, but the technique isn't as important as character- listening to the Word isn't a technique issue, it is a heart issue.

Learn to see pride to be a person who grows in grace by the Word in the presence of God.

Early warning quick strike on pride:

A Proud Heart:

- is sure of every point of its beliefs. It can't tell the difference between a major and a minor. It argues as much for a small belief as for a major one, for every conviction.

Any belief, if mine, is a major belief. a proud person argues for all

- isn't teachable, is argumentative

- enjoys confronting or avoids confronting, but doesn't confront with humility. This is a sure sign of a heart trying to patch up an image of righteousness and defend spotless self-image, either loves to

confront or refuses. "I caught you". Put that person in his place. or refuses to confront- can't take anger or criticism in return, won't risk it.

When confronted by a humble person, you may not like it, but you know they care and they listen.

- is always unhappy with its life/ always griping. The humble heart says,

"God must know best", the proud heart is so sure to know what is best that when things go wrong, he gets angry. The proud heart thinks it knows more than God. Nothing is more relaxing than humility.

If these are the marks of your heart, the word won't bear fruit, because you reject it.

3. Lays aside filthiness and wickedness v 21 This is addressed to believers, "beloved brethren

4. Receives the Word in Humility v 21 **God in Christ is the essence of humility** - "save" means to make whole or complete. We are saved and we will be ultimately and finally saved.

This underscores the importance of what is at stake – THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS.

If scripture is right, then there is no more important issue than the state of your soul. And if you know Christ, the joy of knowing that salvation should put everything else into perspective. The man or woman who is delighting in the reality of salvation is unlikely to lash out with angry words over some eternally insignificant slight or disappointment or misunderstanding.

5. Is a doer of the Word v 22-25

To receive the Word is more than simply hearing it. We show that we hear it by doing what it says.

EX: parent to a child – "Did you hear what I said?" the parent is not inquiring about the child's auditory capacity; he or she is looking for the child to act on what is "heard"

We deceive ourselves if we think that merely hearing God's word is sufficient for salvation. Hearing without faith gets us nowhere with God. Hearing is an aid to faith; it is a catalyst to faith, but it is not faith.

Knowledge and memory of the Word are the prelude to the obedience of faith. Knowledge alone only puffs up, but it doesn't save or transform our lives.

I am encouraged that as I look out on this group, I see so many who are 'doers of the word'.

However, we must NOT think that we can ignore the warning of this passage. There is a tendency that when we know more and more, we are applying less and less. It is easy to rest on our laurels and grow lazy. The reality is that we all know more than we apply already. There is a constant threat for self-deception by thinking that knowledge alone equals maturity. This is ONE REASON why we need others who have a green light to speak into our lives.

James gives an illustration from daily life – one looks in a mirror but fails to give attention to what is seen.

Most of us looked into a mirror this morning prior to coming to church. We did so for the purpose of assessing the damage and flaws and to make adjustments.

EX: We may do so like the Queen in Snow White..."mirror, mirror on the wall...?"

The purpose of the mirror is to reveal things that we may not want to see but need to see. When corrections can be made, we rejoice. If we miss something it can lead to embarrassment.

EX: looking in a mirror hours after lunch and realizing that you've had that little piece of salad stuck between your teeth in full display. We remove it immediately and then we shutter in the thought that we've been walking around like that for hours and NO ONE told us. So much for our so-called friends, right?

Don't ignore what the mirror reveals, i.e. don't ignore what the mirror of the Word reveals. James says, "don't be like the guy who looks in the mirror and ignores what he sees", but v. 25, "be like the guy who looks into the law of God and follows it."

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 will be blessed in what he does.

James affirms the blessing for those who look at and abide by the perfect Law. This is an affirmation of the authority and power of scripture – v. 18 it gives us birth and is able to save our souls from filthiness and wickedness. It is the "law of liberty".

John 8

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

This last phrase is very popular, even in secular circles. It is one of the most misused verses in all of scripture. In fact, it is etched in stone above the entrance to the main library at UGA.

Do you want liberty and freedom in your soul and life?

Then read and apply the Word, not as a "to do list", but as a response to the God who gave you life, breath, and a new heart. Knowing the author of the book creates an appetite for the book He wrote. We are to be 'doers' because we have been brought to life by the author. We have a relationship with the Word because we have a relationship with the author. The law of liberty is given to those who have already been set free by Christ; it is not designed as a way for us to EARN our freedom.

Ex; EXODUS – God gave the 10 commandments to those he had already delivered

THE MANNER OF LOOKING AT THE LAW OF LIBERTY

v. 25 –

Do we look INTENTLY at the perfect law of liberty?

Do we persevere or abide with and in the Word? (even when it may not seem to be 'working' for us)

Are we forgetful hearers or are we effectual doers?

Having a long QT and even memorizing scripture are great, but they are not fruitful if we are NOT DOERS of what we read.

Motyer: The law of God is the law of liberty because it safeguards, expresses and enables the life of true freedom into which Christ has brought us. This is the blessing of which James speaks (25), the blessing of a full life, a true humanity. Obedience is the key factor in our enjoyment of it.

Obedience is how we enjoy this new life, not how we earn entrance into it.

Since the Word comes from a gracious God why would we not act upon hearing His Word?

We are to be inspired by this passage, not overwhelmed by it in the process of growth. Walking by faith, in the Spirit, is a lifelong journey, not a sprint. It is a journey of liberty and freedom when we follow the plan of our creator. It sounds counter-intuitive, right? The way to FREEDOM is to be a servant of Christ, but that is the way of faith.

As we go through James, don't go home and make a long to do list. That would be tempting because James just keeps on coming with advice, commands, and exhortations. INSTEAD, go home and think about it, perhaps get some input from one who knows you, and think of ONE AREA FOR GROWTH. Just ONE.

I HEARD this quote from David Powlison

We are simple people ; we don't change all at once. Life goes one step at a time. Connect one bit of scripture with one step of life. –

When you change in one area you will see how it impacts others.

EX: Years ago, I spoke often with a man who was struggling with inappropriate viewing online, etc. After this was exposed, he began to get counsel and help in that struggle. What he noticed was that there were other previously undetected areas of sin that also came to the surface. They were all related to the main problem but weren't as evident.

EX: pride, anger, and a sharp tongue can often be overlooked or even elevated in our culture. They may be seen as "understandable sins". Pro athletes are known for their self-praise after a big play; they are known for trash talking before, during, and after a game. It has filtered down to youth sports level.

The "understandable sins" can easily grow and bear the toxic fruit of addiction, rebellion, violence and murder, i.e behaviors that show a lack of liberty and freedom.

NOTE THE PROMISE...

THOSE who are intent and persistent in the Word in obedience will be **BLESSED BY God**. Even if they face trials, they can know liberty in their souls.

Jeff Purswell Blessing = to bask in the Smile of God

Aaronic Blessing – Numbers – The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his Face to shine upon you, and give you peace. **THIS CAN HAPPEN EVEN IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS.**

The opposite of the blessing is to have god "hide his face" – Deut 31:16-17

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the prostitute with the foreign gods of the land into the midst of which they are going, and they will abandon Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷Then My anger will be kindled against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will find them;

This is the language of social distancing that you **DO NOT WANT TO EXPERIENCE** – God hiding His face. He withdraws his protective presence by turning us over to what we want and we become slaves to sin rather than living in the joy of the perfect law of liberty.

We will close with looking at verse 26. It is rather providential that we get this verse just a few days before an election.

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.

This is a very sober warning **AND** it is easier for some than others.

HOW TO HAVE GRACIOUS AND CIVIL CONVERSATIONS IN TROUBLED TIMES:

"Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" James 1:19

Think of a political / social / religious belief you oppose so strongly that you can't imagine how someone else could hold it.

If you say, "I can't understand how someone can hold that view", then you have just identified a 'YOU' problem, not a "them" problem.

YOU have a lack of understanding.

James tells us to be quick to **HEAR**, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

So ask **YOURSELF AND YOUR FRIEND** some questions:

-Is it possible that someone can have a different perspective and still be a divine image bearer?

AS a Christian that is our default position – remember that.

If you're not a Christian or don't have a category for "divine image bearer" then watch out because it is an easy step to dehumanize those who disagree with you. When you dehumanize in your mind and speech, you can easily rationalize all sorts of behaviors. History is full of this – from chattel slavery, to Nazi Germany, to abortion. If we believe the absurd, we are more likely to do the atrocious.

-Have you always held this view, or did you ever hold the opposite view? What caused you to change your mind?

-If we're all honest, we'd admit that our views are shaped by the opinions we hear in the media and culture. How certain are you that your sources are correct? Have you ever honestly checked out opposing viewpoints? Sadly, today we may have to ask, "Do you know if you even have access to all the information that you need?"

-Can we agree that both of us may actually want what is best for people, even though we may disagree on what "the best" is, or what the best approach is?

From a recent article by Carl Ellis- professor at RTS

<https://rts.edu/resources/a-biblical-approach-to-protest/>

Our transcendent reference point – the glory of God – is the basis of our wisdom

Jesus held the moral high ground. We should follow suit AND take the time to ascertain and sort out the facts.

Ad-hominem attacks distract us from the real issues

Let the Word of God do the heavy lifting.

When we define the points of agreement with our co-belligerents, we must make sure that our shared words have the same meaning.

"Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" James 1:19

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.

The shadow of God's grace seen in v. 18 falls on all the applications of v. 19-27. We obey because

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

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