

Pt 5 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – Hearing and Doing the Word

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 03-14-2018

† James 1:19-27

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

We pick up tonight with verse 19 which is a continuation of what we studied last week about man being tempted by his own flesh and that God tempts no one to sin and that we are God's "first fruits of His creation." James follows up with a "Wherefore," meaning, "now that I have told you that..."

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath

Now that you have heard the truth – my beloved brethren – notice that James uses an endearing term of **beloved** which means *someone that is loved and held dear*. Even though James is very direct and matter of fact in his letter, you have to understand that he is that way out of love for his fellow believers. He is much like a loving father that wants them to know the truth. Sometimes the truth is hard to hear. That is why he says, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."

One of the problems we have in the day in which we live is that most people are more interested in speaking than hearing. Listening has almost become a dying quality. I used to have a teacher at school that would say "somebody's got diarrhea of the mouth!" There's a lot of people that need to take some Imodium AD for the mouth! We need to learn to be better listeners than speakers. As long as you are speaking you aren't listening and you aren't learning. You learn from listening.

Speaking of school... how do you learn in school? By listening. The student doesn't go in the classroom to teach, they go to the classroom to learn. Learning comes by listening. James says that we need to be "swift to hear." That means "ready and waiting to receive instruction." And "slow to speak." He doesn't mean to talk slower he means "think before you speak." If you are going to speak make it count. Growing up around my dad I learned that if he spoke – I better be listening because he was a man of few words and if he was speaking then something was important.

Then James follows that up with **19d...slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.**

This is one that I have had to work on in my life. I'm much better than I used to be but if I'm not careful I can allow myself to get angry easily. Maybe I grew up watching too many Cowboy Movies and Bugs Bunny cartoons where there was always somebody flying off the handle. But the truth is, someone that is slow to wrath has a hard time listening and understanding. That is why Solomon wrote in the Proverbs: **Proverbs 14:29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.**

Not only do they not have a great understanding, James says that they "worketh not the righteousness of God." How can we work the righteousness of God when we are angry and full of wrath? The Bible has much to say about the behavior of a quickly angered man:

Proverbs 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Proverbs 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. .

So, according to the Bible, a man that is quick to wrath is an unrighteous, strifeful, weak, fool. OUCH! James punches me again!

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Now James seems to be addressing matters of the mind. All sin is sin but there are some sins that are considered "filthy" sins – these sins begin in the human mind and it means "to be morally corrupt." The truth is the human mind can conjure up all kinds of filthy, depraved things. People with filthy minds are dangerous and wicked. The Psalmist writes this in **Psalms 14:2-3 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.**

Being morally corrupt and filthy are the reasons that God destroyed the earth with water. When God put the plan in motion for the great flood, this is what he said about man: **Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

James warns us that we must lay apart all filthiness and "superfluity of naughtiness." That phrase means "abounding in evil."

Once that is laid aside then he says: **and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**

That word "engrafted" means "implanted or affixed to." Think of it in terms grafting a plant together with another one. You can take things such as roses or fruit trees and cut the top of one and the bottom of the other and press them together and wrap them up and they will graft together and become one. Similar to skin grafts. Doctors take a piece of good skin and engraft it onto an area of skin that has been burned or badly damaged and it will grow in that area and become skin as if it belonged there. That is the same thing that God's Word should do to us. It should engraft into our hearts and minds until it becomes part of us and we become one.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

He says: “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” In other words, “you have read the Word of God, you have heard the word preached, you have sat under sound doctrine, you’ve been told right from wrong, you faithfully attended services, you heard everything there is to hear but you haven’t acted upon anything that you’ve heard!”

We can find ourselves guilty of this if we aren’t careful: You dressed up every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, every Wednesday night; you come to Church, you open your Bible, you read along with the Scripture reading, you sit and listen to the Word being preached, you pray, and then you walk out the door and never think another thing about it. – This is what is called “Religiosity”

I fear that this country is full of people that faithfully attend Church services and hear the Word preached but never act upon anything they hear – they never DO.

Some will listen to preaching and think “oh yeah preacher, you got THEM good today! Somebody really needed that one!” Seems like the Word is always for somebody else and never for themselves.

Why, Brother Byron, I’ve been a member of this Church since 1863. I’ve sat on row number 9 on the right hand side of the church for 100 years. I’ve underlined every single passage of Scripture that has ever been read in this church. I’ve even committed to memory numerous Bible scriptures.

Well that’s all well and good but what did you DO with all of those Scriptures you heard and read? How did you ACT upon them? You may notice that many times when I pray before I preach, I ask the Lord to do a mighty work within our hearts. Or I’ll say “may Your Word do a mighty work within our hearts.” I’m not saying this just to have something cute to say. I’m saying it because I expect not only myself, but for you the listener to let the Word of God penetrate your heart and cause you to act upon His Word.

James says that if you only hear the word but never DO the word that you are only deceiving your own self! Now, it is bad enough to deceive other people but to deceive your own self is a downright shame. If you think your only responsibility is to come and sit under preaching, then you are grossly deceived!

Coming to Church is not some kind of show that you come to watch. You aren’t a spectator. Many people think Church is like going to the movies. You pick out your seat, you get comfortable, you look around to see who else is there and you sit back and relax to enjoy the show. Then you walk out of the theatre and wonder where you are going to go eat? Oh sure, you may have remembered a few lines from the movie and you saw some really cool scenes but that is as far as you take it. Which is how it should be with a movie, but not for Church and sitting under the preaching of God’s Word. It will never be engrafted into us if we treat it that way.

So, we must not only be hearers – we also must be doers. James says if we are only hearers and not doers then we are **deceiving your own selves**. It’s bad enough to deceive other people but when you deceive yourself you’ve really messed up. I’m afraid there are a lot of deceived Church members these days.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Notice he says that if you are a hearer of the word and not a doer, you are like a **MAN** looking at his own face in the mirror and then walking away and without so much as running a comb through our hair. Notice he did not say a **WOMAN**. Because we all know a man and woman look in the mirror in 2 very different ways. Come on guys, you know it’s true. We glance in the mirror because it is there and then we walk away with that huge cow lick sticking up in the back hairs sticking out of our ears and nose and your wife has to tell you to go back and take care of those things.

My Great Uncle Adral Hall must not have paid any attention to the mirror. He was a pastor (the one that was preaching the day I got saved) and every time I would go somewhere with him and my Great Aunt Parlie, he would be driving, and she would be in the passenger’s seat licking her fingers and wiping down the cowlick sticking out of the back of his hair. I think I inherited his cow licks!

But a woman doesn’t just glance in the mirror, she gazes, she scrutinizes, she spends much time in front of it making sure everything is exactly in place. You think I’m kidding? Guys, how many of you have a mirror in your pocket or billfold? Not a one of you. Ladies, how many of you have a mirror of some kind in your purse? Every single one of you! Come on now, you know it is true! Don’t make me ask you to get them out!

So, the man in the mirror isn’t necessarily absent minded, but he is inattentive. He saw what was in the mirror, but he didn’t pay attention to it.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

That phrase, **But whoso looketh into**, has the thought behind it of someone who gets real close and examines something. He is looking at every detail like a Prospector examining a piece of gold.

But, we aren’t inspecting gold nuggets, James says we are looking into the “**perfect law of liberty**.” The Psalmist says over in **Psalm 19:7** *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.* The perfect law of liberty is the perfect law of God. It is God’s will, purpose, and plan and it is perfect, not a single flaw in it. It is also the measure in which sinful man will be judged one day. That’s what James says in the next chapter when he is dealing with law breakers. He says: **James 2:12** *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* But here in **James 1:25** he says that we are to “**continue therein**.” And, if we do that and are hearers and DOERS the Bible says that “**this man shall be blessed in his deed**.”

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.

Then James wraps up these thoughts on hearers and doers by giving a strong warning. A warning about “**seeming to be religious**.” I’m afraid there are a lot of “**seemingly religious**” people in this world. These are the talkers but not the walkers. They talk a big talk but do not walk a big walk. It reminds me of when I was a young boy and I would dress up like a cowboy – hat, boots, gun belt, two six-shooters, a rifle, I even had a canteen. I was dressed up like a real cowboy, but I wasn’t really a cowboy I was just pretending. I think there are a lot of people dressed up like Christians today but they are just pretending. The sad part is the Bible he “**deceiveth his own heart**,” not only that but it also says, “**this man’s religion is vain**.”

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

That phrase, “**pure religion**,” is meaning a religion that is genuine and sincere, there isn’t anything improper or deceptive in it.

Then he says “**undefiled before God and the Father**,” meaning God Himself recognizes this persons religion as true pure religion – not one in vain or pretend but the real deal.

He also uses God’s person as “**Father**” here to indicate the love and care that God has for his children – which is why he continues with the description of this “**pure religion**,” *To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.* To “**visit**” means **to take care of**, it doesn’t mean to go to their house and sit a spell over coffee. It is the care, comfort, and attention to the needs of those that cannot care for themselves. This would cover any type of need they may have, spiritual, physical, emotional, etc.

Then he sums it up with “*and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*” A person with pure religion will not defile himself with the sins of this world. The word “**unspotted**,” means “**free from vice or censure, beyond reproach, to be unblemished by sin.**”

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version