

A Study in James
Part 5 – “The Word”
James 1:16-27

TAKE YOUR BIBLES PLEASE...

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:16-27 ESV).

James uses this point in his letter to explain a concept he introduces in verse 18, *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures*. Paul calls it the “gospel of salvation.” **It no doubt means the revelation of God's will, just as we use the word gospel most often today.** This concept is so important to the Christian's life, James elaborates as he says it must be the dominating factor in maintaining, disciplining, and maturing the life it began in us.

Each of us has certain responsibilities to this Gospel:

First, We Must Hear the Word.

1. *First, James says, Let everyone be quick to hear.* The thrust of the verb is very strong; it involves a command. He says we ought to make ourselves ready to hear, to be on edge to hear the communication of God to us. It is like a runner in a race who gets down in his stance waiting for the starting gun. All his muscles are tensed, waiting for the signal. It also calls to mind the image of a football player waiting for the proper signal of the quarterback to being a play.
2. *Second, James emphasizes the act of hearing itself.* It is one thing to be ready to hear, it is another to actually hear! This involves being slow to speak and slow to anger. In the early church, as well as today, everyone seemed ready to speak. Then and now, the need is for us to listen for and be willing to learn from the Word of God. It is this close, attentive attitude that James calls us toward.

It is interesting that James adds the “slow to anger” aspect to the command to listen and learn from the Gospel. It should be noted that he is not talking about that quick burst of

temper we often associate with anger. Here he is talking about the settled emotion of resentment. It is that abiding condition that often accompanies thoughts of revenge toward others. Further he explains why this is so important. It simply does not produce the righteousness of God. Literally, the wrath of man does not produce the rightness of God. The point is that the wrath of man hinders their attaining the righteousness and accomplishment God desires in our lives. There are three assumptions in this truth:

- a. It assumes that all who have been regenerated by the Word of truth are obligated to promote the righteousness of God in the earth.
- b. It also implies that the man of wrath does not practice this righteousness.
- c. Last, it teaches that wrath NEVER furthers the cause of right.

There aren't many absolutes in life, but this is one of them. God is never pleased with the anger we exhibit toward one another.

A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. (Proverbs 29:22 ESV).

Second, the Word of God Demands Reception.

The Word of God demands another thing from us; beside demanding that we be quick to hear it, we are to receive it.

He uses language that calls us to embrace the Word of God, to make it our own. You must personalize this Gospel. It ought to become a concept of the first person to us. It must relate to "I" as much as "we".

James lists a prerequisite to receiving the Word, however. He says we must first "*put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness.*" This verb, "put away," speaks of the same action as that of taking off dirty clothes. At the end of a long, hard day's work and arriving at home you must take off your dirty clothes before you shower and clean up. The impact is not that we do something worthy of forgiveness; it is more than we come to an admission that we are dirty and need a bath.

Certainly this is underscored in the use of the word "meekness." It speaks of an inward grace of the soul. It is this attitude that produces humility and modesty. It is the kind of quality that makes us do the things appropriate to the condition of our new life.

God intends for us to become meek in receiving the implanted Word so that we can show his love in everyday life. More than that, however, it is to save our souls. Salvation comes to us the instant we accept Christ. James is speaking of the work of sanctification in this verse. It is this continuing, living, growing, maturing process whereby we become more and more of what God intends us to be.

Third, the Word of God Demands Practice.

This is the third demand the Gospel places on us. We must be doers of the Word and not merely listeners.

True hearing and receiving must result in obedience. The person who responds to the demands of the Word only now and then, who acts by impulses and only at intervals and spurts, is not a real doer. To be a real doer of the Word means to submit to its authority and to comply with its requirements.

It is a must that we understand the doing of God's word is to be a vital part of our lives. [Look at verses 23-25:](#)

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

The point is that hearing without doing is of little or no benefit. This was the problem of the people of Israel just before Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem in 586-587 BC. Jeremiah warned them that their "ears were closed." (Jeremiah 6:10).

It is a good challenge to accept... to hear, accept, and do the Gospel!