



James Series #4: "Behind the Facade" Pastor Tim Dodson, Jesus Fellowship of Believers April 13th, 2014

Chapter 1:19 -27 *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of 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 observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James has been telling us ...warning us, about the need for faith and endurance in the midst of testing, in the midst of temptation. He pointed out that God gives "good and perfect" gifts to empower us to survive both Satan and the wickedness of our own hearts. Now if that is true, then we are without excuse. We have no reason to whine and complain about how hard it is to be a Christian! God hasn't taken away the enemy or his attacks, but He has given you some big guns to fight with.

Because He has, He also therefore has some expectations out of His investments. He not only expects us to fight, but He fully expects us to win. In light of this equipping, He now sends "marching orders" ...*training procedures and battle formations*. He begins with the exhortation to be "swift to hear." Such is advisable anytime and for anyone, but it is especially true when you are in the midst of the battle and bullets are flying. There are some very critical times in our lives that it would greatly behoove us to shut up and listen instead of arguing, defending, and giving others direction. Proverbs is a good place to find direction on this matter: **29:20** *Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.* **10:19** *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.* **17:27-28** *A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.*(NLT)

Sadly, folks so often set out to find God's will and direction for their lives, but they spend all of their time leading up to that decision talking instead of listening. And, just as this passage seems to intimate, so often that ordeal is also wrapped up in anger. So...can you imagine? *"I think I need to make this critical decision for my life and I am so fired up in anger and emotionally passionate and I won't stop blabbing long enough to hear the council of my brothers and sisters, let alone the 'still small voice' of the Spirit of God."* Sounds like a suicide run to me. Yet this is the well beaten trail traveled by all those I have watched move from blessing to blight. All ran out of the church screaming with their spiritual fingers in their ears. The motivation...the *cause* of this phenomena is not complicated nor is it hard to attain. For this is caused by simple pride. There is no bomb as big or does more damage as that one! ***Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Pr 16:18***

We are told that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." But many people hear the Word of God, and to them it is only words. They may intellectually accept it as the Word of God, but it remains forever in the theoretical knowledge of God and never moves into the experiential knowledge. Which means they will tell you what the bible says...call it 'God's Word,' ...say it is to be followed...tell you it is "powerful, and sharper than a two edged sword", but when it actually comes time to 'pull the trigger' they fail to follow through. For them, it's just theory. And sooner or later, every one of us will be tested on this matter and we will then honestly prove which side of the fence we are really on.(Note: that's why we have the guidelines and parameters of the Disciples Community

here in this church...the *opportunity* and frankly *'the test'* of one's faith. To see that it is not just theory but reality and practice. People have often approached the School of Ministry here with the idea of "allow me to come in as a student and I will minister." And my response is "minister, and I will let you in as a student." The same is becoming more and more true of the School of Discipleship too because of the same reasons!)

These folks can generally be spotted doing a lot of talking, and very little listening and even less *doing!*

James goes on to tell us "for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." It's a sad testament that he needs to tell us that and that we need to hear it. For one would think that such is a 'no-brainer.' But apparently not. Temperamental anger is one of the most personal 'excused' sins in believers lives. We think it is no big deal, or that we are justified. Really? You mean like Jesus was justified when they lied about Him, beat Him senseless and then crucified Him and He responded with "*forgive them Father...they don't know what they are doing?*" I am astounded by people who claim to be God's kids...filled with His living Spirit, and then turn and spew garbage...just evil lies and whatever they can do to hurt someone else. How does that work in God's dispensation? *It doesn't.* For some people, anger is as powerful and as "life destructive" as any drug addiction. It doesn't matter whether it is a slow seething anger or the kind that flashes in rage, it will hinder spiritual growth as well as our use in furthering of the Kingdom of God. It will eventually...*every time*, take you out of the game.

The text continues, "*So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls.*" Notice that as scripture so often does, the language is emphatic with the presence of the word "all." We are to seek to get rid of *all* the junk! This verse speaks concerning some practical application of the Spirit of God to our lives. It's not a complicated concept. Like so much of this book, James is saying "stop just talking about it and step up and *do* it." We are called to action here, to put these things away. And apparently we are not to sit around waiting for a mysterious supernatural and unilateral miracle to take place, but to take our garbage out to the curb ourselves, though God will empower you to act if you are indeed *willing* to act. This speaks of *our* part in our personal sanctification. Please note that this is the BIBLE saying this...not just this pastor!

Acceptance of the Word must be followed by persistent obedience to the Word ...Hearing must be followed by active doing; otherwise the hearing is useless. But obedience to the Word has to be more than just the tacit practice of outward forms of "religion" (church attendance, financial giving, participation in prayers and singing). There has to be a development of an inner two way communiqué with God and faithful follow through on our part. There has to be a "living out" of the same radical faith that took Jesus to the cross. Truly *receiving* the Word of God is not just *acknowledging* the right information, but *acting* upon that right information!

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." (1 Thess 2:13)

Verses 22-25 *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 observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

The scripture herein is calling us to practical Christ modeled living. This is what is clearly an "applied Christianity." Where the 'rubber meets the road.'" Where theory and 'theoretical knowledge' comes to the edge of the diving board, and there is clearly only two ways to go. But this is profoundly against our very human nature. For the fact remains that we in our humanity disdain being told what to do. And the greater church today has found a way...albeit a weak theology on any scale, to cry foul when it comes to this directive by attributing it all to legalism. We cry out "I'm

saved by grace, not by works!" Amen! That's true! But this is not speaking of coming to salvation. This is not speaking about our redemption, our positional "cross ordained" status, nor the love of God toward us. This is speaking of the power of the cross to change a man. This is encompassing the profound power and effect of the Holy Spirit *post salvation*. We absolutely understand from the rest of scripture that a man is not *saved* through his works, he will work *because* he is saved and has a new love and passion in his life. Our works are a true "acid test" of our relationship with Him. To deny this is to deny scripture, reject that God's salvation changes a person profoundly, and emasculates the deification...the ramifications, the very power of God. To run down this road is blasphemy against God and His Word.

According to this passage, the one who attempts to merely *hear* the Word without *acting* upon it, is *deceiving himself*. In what way? Deceiving himself that all is well between the Spirit of God and himself. Perhaps even deceiving himself that he is indeed born again.

This is so applicable in today's church-going world. We are comfortably led to believe that our church attendance, merely sitting through another church service where the Word is spoken of, is the heart of Christianity. It is not. 1 John 2:3-6 *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. "*

*"...whoever **does** the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."* (Mt 12:50)

*"If you **know** these things, you are blessed if you **do** them."* (John 13:17)

James tells us that our attempts to avoid this truth in factually nothing more than self-deception. After all, why do we look into a mirror? Don't we do so to check out how we look and to see what needs to be combed and straightened? James is pointing to how ridiculous it is to look into a mirror if we have no intention to fix what is messed up. For us, the "mirror" is the Word of God. When we look into the "mirror" we see our "natural face." Isaiah 64:6... *"we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."*

*"Therefore everyone who **hears** these words of Mine, and **acts** upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who **hears** these words of Mine, and **does not act** upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."* (Mt 7:24, 25-note, Mt 7:26, 27).

MacArthur writes that here James "is describing characteristic behavior, not occasional activity. It is one thing to fight; it is something else to be a soldier. It is one thing to build a shed; it is something else to be a builder. James is not merely challenging his readers to do the Word; he is telling them that real Christians are doers of the Word. That describes the basic disposition of those who believe unto salvation."

Pollster George Barna (in World [2003], p. 33) found that one out of three "born-again Christians" (defined as "those who report having made a personal commitment to Christ and expect to get to heaven because they accepted Jesus") accept same-sex unions. Thirty-nine percent believe it is morally acceptable for couples to live together before marriage. And, born-again Christians are more likely than non-Christians to have experienced divorce (27 to 24 %)! How can this be? Where is the disconnect? We are so often "*hearers that deceive ourselves*." We want to believe that Jesus loves us so it doesn't matter how I live. Do we actually believe that Jesus saved us only to leave us living as we did before? Are we here merely to audit the class or are we taking the tests for credit? Are we here to receive instruction that we in turn go out and live accordingly? Do we really *want* this life that He is offering?

The "law of liberty" which is spoken of herein speaks of the liberty of Galatians 5:1 "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*" The Old Testament law by itself gave no hope and could not give life. It was given to show man's guilt and condemnation of sin, which it did and still does today. It is the standard for which to approach the living God, and you can't follow it! But the New testament post-cross law of liberty is a very different animal. It is the new direction for our lives in light of the Spirit of God which now dwells in us and empowers us.

This is not the freedom *to* sin, but a freedom *to not* sin. It is the freedom from sin's power, and sin's penalty. We are free from eternal death that comes with sin. We are free to choose life because at last we understand the choice and the blessings that come through obedience as well as the pain and death of sin! Our eyes have been opened upon our salvation and our rebirth.

"And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." **John 8:35-36**

"... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." **2 Cor 3:17**

Our salvation and our new relationship with Christ is not to provide us with the freedom to sin...nor the freedom to do nothing for kingdom. It is the freedom to *not* sin...the freedom to now live for and serve God and kingdom. Before we were in bondage to sin and we were compelled to sin...we were prisoners. But no longer...now we are free indeed!

And now, what a person does in and for Christ, reflects the affect of the gospel working in him. Those that have truly experienced that gospel understands and embraces this "law of liberty." They move freely in it and respond to it. The individual that does nothing for the Lord or the kingdom fails to understand the magnitude of the gift and the power of God's presence in his life, or has never really experienced real salvation! "*...for it is God who works in you (WHY?) ...both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*" **Philippians 2:13**

Then, in the "doing", lies the bounty of blessing as one comes to know God's "ways" as well as His "acts." To be in that place where His Spirit is fully manifested through our lives is an experience like no other.

Verses 26-27 *"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."*

Throughout this letter, James gives evidence of a receptive and active heart in a truly redeemed individual. For the person that has indeed received His saving grace and claims to live in His light, will reflect a profound transformation. He will manifest the fact that He has been changed! For real love cannot be hidden! Is that not a fact? Nor does the bearer even try to keep it concealed. True love overflows the container in which it is housed, because true love is a living, growing thing, and cannot be buried away.

James gives us a practical example of this change. He tells us that one way we see the redeemed life in action is the control of our mouths. We can go to church all our lives...be active in the "rituals" of religious orthodoxy, but "true religion" is exercised in a controlled tongue, as well as..."doing" the things of Christ and kingdom. Not because we have to, but because we want to...because we get to, because they are the new passion of our redeemed lives. If that love truly exists within us, we will never be able to keep it bottled up. Christianity is not just a noun or an adjective, it is a verb; active, living, and manifested in all we touch.