

Dec. 1, 2013

The Fruit of Righteousness James 1:19-27

We are continuing in a new sermon series from the book of James. It is written by James the half-brother of Jesus to the scattered and persecuted Jews as a practical guide on how to live our Christian life.

All Stand and Read Scripture

James 1:19-27

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁹ *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in 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 natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, 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 an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in 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. ²⁷ 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.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

James was writing to Jews who were going through serious persecution. In their day, no one really cared if they proclaimed that Jesus was Lord, but they did require, when confronted, to profess that Caesar was lord. If they would not do it, they were severely punished and often killed until Constantine made Christianity acceptable in Rome around 313 AD. If they were asked to profess that Caesar was lord and offer a sacrifice in his name, and refused to do it, they often times were killed.

Polycarp was a second century bishop who was a disciple of John. When he was 86 years old, he refused to proclaim that Caesar was lord or to offer a sacrifice and they killed him. He became a witness to others in that time that there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, and they could not bow down to Caesar. Many of them were killed as well.

It is very easy for us today to confess Jesus as our Lord with our mouths, because we do not suffer persecution for it. Can you imagine, how much harder it would be if we would potentially be killed for that confession? Would our convictions be strong enough to hold to our faith? It is easy for us to hear God's word proclaimed and say "Amen. I agree with that", but "doing His word can be much harder than just listening to the Word proclaimed. That is what James is going to share with us today.

Last week we finished with verses 16-18, which I would like to read to you again because it leads us into today's message.

James 1:16-18

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 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.

God brought us forth by His Word and His Spirit working in us. He also reminds us that God **only and always** does good for His children. He may do things to discipline us; he may put us through trials; but He will **only** do things that are good for His children.

BODY:

I. Even Temperment.

With that said now we begin in verse 19. OK then, if God brought us forth and God only does good, then here is what you could do with that. **You should let your righteousness, or your faith in God, naturally produce fruit by your works.** How?

James 1:19-20

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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

When we feel threatened or persecuted, we tend to say things we shouldn't. James is saying, if we really believe that we have been brought forth by God and He only does good to His Children and He is in control. Then, as **difficulties arise**, we can give the person time to speak and listen. His words are not going to cause us any **eternal peril**. We can show self control. We can be slower to answer and give a thoughtful response. There is no need for anger.

These Jews were seeing persecution every day. James is telling them (and us) to just remember that no matter how bad it gets to trust in the Lord. We are called to be witnesses for Christ. We are to witness that Jesus Christ is Lord. If we take up that call and trust Jesus then we will listen to them, be patient, and stay calm.

Ultimately, the bottom line is, if someone needs to change, who is going to change them?...GOD.

If I need to change, who needs to change me?...GOD.

We are just messengers for Christ. Ultimately, we must believe and trust that God is the one who can change **others** and God is the one who can change **me**. When I stay calm, my witness will be reflected through my words and through my attitude toward others.

Learning to listen patiently, speak thoughtfully, and withhold anger are **FRUITS of our righteousness**.

That is hard enough! My words do not always reflect who Christ is or Christ's image in us. It is hard sometimes to not get angry! And then James goes on to say...

II. Put Aside Worldly Ways

James 1:21

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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

ILLUSTRATION:

These Jews were in persecution. You would think that James would say, "Oh, I know, those Romans are terrible. We must get rid of those Romans. If we do not get rid of those Romans, we are never going to get to live in peace!" But, James never talks about what to do to the Romans." Instead he talks about what Christ **has done and will do for you** in spite of the Romans. He is telling them to listen carefully, watch their words, and do not get angry.

III. Embed God's Word in Your Heart

He tells them to **live righteously, be sanctified**. Do not continue doing the things of the world. If you remember in verse 18 He tells us the "**He brought us forth by the word of truth**". This should result in change of our words and our actions which will reflect that God is working in us to accomplish His will. Our **heart should be changed** so that worldly ways and wickedness has been pushed aside. "**in humility receive the word implanted**" is talking about a **heart change**.

It is only by the embedding of God's word, that we can know how to live for Christ and be saved.

Summary up to now:

Listen patiently.

Speak thoughtfully.

Don't get angry.

Put aside filthiness and sin of thought, word, or action.

Embed your heart with God's Word.

IV. Be a Hearer and a Doer

James 1:22

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Once we have put on Christ, hearing is not enough.

He is telling us to stop living for **self interest** and start living for **God's interest**.

It is a change of no longer depending on myself to get through life, to trusting God to supply our needs and provide for my interests.

The Jews attitude goes from wishing **something would happen** to the Romans who doesn't like us and the Jews who don't like us to realizing that **God is in control**. Instead of **fearing them**, let me consider how I might be **a witness to them**.

James is saying that if you are a hearer and not a doer, you are deceiving yourself. If you are a **hearer that never does**, then you are not a believer at all, because true belief leads to some doing.

We are not saved by works, but being saved results in works.

James 1:23-24

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²³ 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; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

We hear the Word or read of Word and see something that we need to change, it kind of like looking in the mirror. We say, "That's me! I am missing the mark there. I am not doing what God called me to do. My, I ought to fix that! I ought to change that! What time is the ballgame? What are we doing later."

We forget!

We leave our time in the Word or we walk out of church and **life distracts us** and we don't follow up on the action. As Christians we don't always do what we "**should do, could do, or ought to do**". If we are Christians, we should have the attitude that we want to do it. We should want to fix what our convictions have shown to us.

So, James, how do I do it? How can I see my faults in the mirror and not just walk away?

Here is James' answer. If we hear anything this morning, listen carefully here to James.

V. Abide by God's Word.

James 1:25

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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.

We are not saved by works, but we are saved to works. The fact that we sin separates us from God and we can never do enough works to make up for it. James is telling us that if we study the word of God, embed it in our hearts, and live by it by putting the word into action, we will be blessed.

We must remember that God defines the word "blessed". Polycarp was blessed, but he also was martyred. **Doing what God calls you to do** is the **definition** of "**blessing**".

We have to believe that the word is perfect. It is the inspired word of God. Both the Old Testament law and the Liberty of the new covenant. We must believe that doing what the word says regardless of the trials that we go through for it in the long term will produce **liberty, freedom, and blessing**. God's word is perfect.

But James continues by providing a test of our faith...

VI. Control Your Tongue

James 1:26-27

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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. ²⁷ 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.

James is saying that we think we are a child of God, then our tongue (or the words coming out of our mouth) will be under control and reflect righteousness. If we proclaim to be a Christian, but our words do not reflect our faith, then James says we are only deceiving ourselves.

You will notice that James **reiterates** thoughts. Again he goes back to the tongue. He repeats himself because he knows that we are forgetful and he wants to **emphasize that our attitudes are important**.

VII. Put Your Faith into Action

Some may read verse 27 and think that if that is all I need to do to be saved, then that will be very easy. Actually, if visiting orphans and widows in distress would happen on our watch without the encouragement of love for others, it would never be done.

James is saying that if we are truly a child of God, our faith will generate action. He says "whoever comes into your path with need, help them." As true needs enter into our path, we need to help them. It is hard to be a doer. Quit worrying about what has been taken from you and start giving what you do have.

Another sign to show that you are in the faith is if you keep unstained by the world. You keep away from worldly ways. People see Jesus in you when you act on your faith. We find freedom, liberty, and blessing when we follow Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Listen patiently.
Speak thoughtfully.
Don't get angry.
Put aside filthiness and sin of thought, word, or action.
Embed your heart with God's Word.
Be a hearer and a doer.
Control your tongue.
Put your faith into action.

Christ is Lord. He will either be your merciful, loving, perfect, savior and Lord or, if you refuse His lordship, He will be your judge and you will perish in your sins, because He is still Lord. Just because you reject Him does not nullify His lordship. You must bow to his lordship. You need to find out who He is and what He says. What you will find out is that He loves you and His word is perfect and it brings liberty.

We know that God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. If He would do that for us, don't you believe that He also would provide us with His word so we could know how to serve Him? Sometimes it seems safer to be a hearer and not get involved with the doing. Things that might wreck my finances or create ridicule at work, I am not so sure of. It seems safer to be a hearer now, but we know ultimately that we will suffer if we are just a hearer.

Polycarp had enough conviction to being willing to give his life instead of bowing down to Caesar as Lord. Caesar was saying, "either you will bow down before me as Lord and present a token sacrifice or I am going to kill you". But, Polycarp said, "But you are not Lord". So, Polycarp does not offer the sacrifice and the 86 year old man was killed. Caesar continues to act like he is God. But, where is he now? Polycarp is with Jesus. 2000 years later, Polycarp is with Jesus. Where are the Caesars? Where are the ones who thought they were God and wouldn't bow to the true God? Probably not with Jesus.

It may seem safer to side with **Caesar**; to side with **money**; to side with **fame**; to side with **popularity**; to side with the **peer pressure**. It may seem safer, but you are **only safe**; there is **only freedom**; there is **only true blessing**; there is only **eternal blessing** by **hearing and doing the word of God**.

Is Christ Lord of your life?

The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.