

COMMITTED TO ACTION Sunday School- February 2, 2014

Unifying Topic: HEAR AND DO THE WORD

Lesson Text

I. Christians Who Are Slow To Anger (James 1:19-20)

II. Christians Who Hear Also Do (James 1:21-25)

III. True Religion (James 1:26-27)

The Main Thought: But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (James 1:22, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People often talk about what will help others, but they do not take action. What will help them take action? James says that those who are both hearers and doers of the word practice justice.

Lesson Aim: To stress the importance of not only hearing or knowing the Word but also being people who do what they learn from the Word of God as revealed to His people throughout the ages.

Life aim: To develop practical strategies for taking actions that are governed by the Word of God.

1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

1:23 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:

1:24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

1:25 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.

1:26 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.

1:27 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.

HISTORY:

¹James was a common name and there are several men called James in the New Testament. The first of these was James the son of Zebedee. He was the brother of the Apostle John. He was one of the first to believe in the Lord Jesus and he was one of the apostles. Herod the king killed him in about AD 42 (Acts 12:2). As the letter was later than AD 42, this James could not be the writer of it. The other was James the oldest brother of the Lord Jesus. After Jesus was seen by his brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7) after coming back from the dead, James believed in Jesus from that time on. He became a leader in the church in Jerusalem until he died in about AD 62. He is the most likely author of the letter. The purpose of the letter was to expose unbiblical practices and to teach right Christian behavior. He wrote to Jewish Christians residing outside Palestine for they had been scattered and it expresses his concern for these persecuted Christians who were once part of the Jerusalem church.

Chapter 1:1-9 James opens up by expounding who he is; he is a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ with a greeting to the scattered Christians calling them brothers. This was a time when the twelve tribes had been scattered all over the world and had lost their identity and James is referring to all tribes. This short discussion centers on trials/temptations, trusting, transition, treasure, and true religion. James doesn't say how rough life is, but tells them to count it all joy when falling into those many temptations, Why?- Because the trying of their faith works out patience; their patience will have her mature and finished work causing them to lack nothing. He writes, if they need wisdom; understanding; insight, then ask God, for He's able to give it to all men freely, not reprimanding any, but ready to give the wisdom needed. All that's needed is that you ask in faith, not wavering, tossed to and fro like the waves of the sea by the wind that moves it, but really expecting what you ask for. A "waverer" may expect nothing and receive nothing of the Lord because he's doubled-minded and unstable in all his ways. But the lowly brother should rejoice in the Lord. It doesn't mean he is to rejoice because he is poor or unhealthy or cripple, but rejoice despite the circumstances because no matter how terrible they may be, Christ loves the lowly and has promised to exalt him as a king throughout all eternity. But while on earth, his spirit is to be strong as the spirit of a king. Get ready!

Chapter 1:10-12 However, the rich is made low, while the lowly is exalted. Why? - Because the flower of the grass shall pass away. This means that the rich and high have to approach God bare—as nothing and having nothing—approach Him like a little child, poor and without anything. This is the only way God accepts any person. The flower flourished for awhile but it soon passes away. Sometimes trials bring us low; sometimes doing unlawful things bring us low. The

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

status that the rich once had will soon pass away. That is the danger of false security. Let the rich and high person rejoice in the fact that God will accept him when he comes lowly. The sun rises with burning heat and withers the grass and flower that was once flourishing and causes them to perish. This is the same with the rich and high—the body of the rich ages and dies. You can't take it with you, therefore, all men, no matter the status stands before God as equals. But blessed is the man that endureth temptation. Why? - He will receive the "*crown of life*" for it is promised to him who love God. This is the reward for enduring. You didn't run the race running too fast or running too slow, but you kept up with God and endured the challenges. The word "*blessed*" means inward and spiritual joy and satisfaction; an inner assurance and confidence that carries one through all the trials and temptations of life no matter the pain, sorrow, loss, or grief. His confidence and joy should be in knowing that God is in full control taking care of him.

Chapter 1:13-18 Our temptations do not come from God. Temptation is the desire and craving for wrong things that God forbids and that are harmful to our human bodies and spirits. We are always blaming someone else for leading us into sin, trying to escape the guilt:

- Man blames woman; woman blames man.
- Spouse blames spouse.
- Child blames parent; parent blames child.
- Student blames teacher; teacher blames the school.
- Employer blames employee; employee blames employer.

God is not the tempter; it says **He cannot**; it's not within Him to do so because of the great love He has for us. And no man can tempt Him with evil! So here God calls it what it is, "*evil!*" Therefore, where does temptation come from? Well as we can see in verse 14—"*But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*" Three steps:

1. There is lust and enticement – the lure and bait tactic; pays attention to and thinks about it.
2. There is the conception of the lust and the birth of sin – begins to picture it in the mind with pleasure and therefore, it is done. Sin is conceived and birthed in the mind, therefore, the heart is set.
3. There is the result of lust and enticement – death.

However, the way to overcome temptation is twofold;

1. If the temptation attacks our thoughts, then we must push the wrong thought out of our mind and then begin to immediately focus our thoughts upon Christ and some passage of Scripture by meditating on it.
2. If the temptation comes from some attraction to our senses, then we must turn our head or body away and flee the temptation. Immediately, we must focus upon Jesus Christ in steadfast prayer and Scripture passage; feeding yourself the Word of God and rebuking the enemy's thoughts.

A Sunday School child explained the matter in simple terms. "*Two men live in my heart: the old man Adam and Jesus. When temptation knocks at the door, somebody has to answer. If I let Adam answer, I will sin, so I send Jesus to answer, He always wins!*"

James says do not err; don't be deceived; do not make the mistake of blaming God. God does his part and we are to do our part! God gives only good gifts. "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...*" He is the Father of lights and He is unchangeable. This is just the opposite because temptations lead people into darkness of guilt and shame of personal disappointment and accusation, of hurting and damaging others, of destruction and death, of secrecy and hidden affairs, of night and closed doors, of hidden and secret acts. God the Creator of the sun moon and stars which by their very nature each gives off and reflects its light because of the Creator. They move in rotation; change from day to night; and vary in intensity and shadow, but God does not follow that pattern. God is **the perfect** light that stands alone needing not to change His character. With His own Will, He brought us forth by the Word of Truth. This is an active expression of God's Will! God wills only to see us born again. He wills for us to know the Word of truth. If we ever hear the word of error, it is not of God. Run from it! It is of some other source, some error that comes to tempt man away from God and His truth. God brings sinners to Christ through His Word. Christians are the evidence of God's new creation; that is, a kind of His firstfruits of His creatures. The OT Jews brought the first fruits too the Lord as the expression of their devotion and obedience. Of all the creatures in the universe, Christians are the highest and finest. A higher birth must mean a higher life! As we feed upon His Word we become part of his firstfruits giving devotion to Him only.

LESSON:

James 1:19-20 Christians Who Are Slow To Anger

1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:— Well then, being of God's firstfruits, let every man, not some, but every man have these certain traits. How can a person make sure that he hears the Word of God and will not fall into temptation? One has to do six things;

1. *He must be quick to hear the Word of God.* We have two ears, so don't talk so much, just listen. The lack of listening combined with lack of restraint in speech leads to ill-tempered action.
2. He must be slow to speak. If we listen carefully before we speak, then we won't get so easily angered. This shows restraint and exposes our conduct and speech in a good way.

3. *He must be slow to wrath or anger.* This means two things:
 - a. A person must not react in anger against God's Word of salvation and righteousness.
 - b. A person must not become angry and act against others in wrath. An angry person cannot do what God says.

This is preparation; this is necessary. We can't walk through life doing as we please. The result will be death. You will then avoid hasty speech and unrighteous anger.

1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. This wrath reveals a deep, internal resentment and rejection and does not produce the righteousness of God. He fails to recognize that the mere human approach cannot change another person's heart and such does not help the purpose of God and causes us not to live up to the standard of God. When we are slow to wrath we are in a better position for God's purpose to work within us; His righteousness is to work in us.

James 1:21-25 Christians Who Hear Also Do

1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, Then for us to have the righteousness of God working in us, we would have to:

4. *Put aside all filthiness.* This is a picture of taking off a dirty garment and putting it aside. A person must lay off every dirty thing and lay it off to the side away from himself. If he enjoys the dirt and the filth, then his mind is going to be on it. His mind will not be clear, not enough to hear the Word of God. The Greek word for "*filthiness*" (*ruparia*) is taken from the Greek word "*rupos*." The word is sometimes used to refer to "*wax in the ear*." So get rid of moral uncleanness and impurity; filth and evil so you can hear and receive the Word of God.
5. *Put aside all that remains of superfluity of naughtiness* (overflow or excess of wickedness; malice, ill will, malignity... The attitude of mind that desires to injure others). The idea is that even putting aside all filthiness, there will still be some naughtiness or wickedness that will show up within us. Therefore, we must be alert to these uprisings and put them off and lay them aside as well. James is telling them and us that in order to hear and receive God's Word, lay aside and put off those things that would cause us not to hear and that would cause us to be tempted to go the other way.

1:21b ...and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. Now, James gives the solution; receive with meekness the engrafted word. The "*engrafted word*" means implanted Word. What is it supposed to do?—save your soul. This is a picture of planting seed in fertile soil. Be as a child before their father, meekly and humbly. The idea is that we must be humble, gentle, quiet, and attentive in listening to the Word of God, with an open heart ready to hear what the Father has to say. As God implants His Word within us, we hear exactly what the Father says and we are to obey His instructions and our soul is saved led by the power of the Holy Spirit. The implanted Word must take root in God's people. In order for it to take root we are to humbly accept the Word; welcome it with a teachable spirit. The Word can continually deliver us from the power of sin.

1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

6. He must be a doer of the Word. It's not enough to only hear the Word of God, we must take action and do the Word; live by the Word as it so instructs us. We may be able to quote the Word, but that does not leave us out from following the Word. There are many who sit under the Word of God week after week, and they learn and know as much of the Word as anyone. They think that their listening and learning makes them acceptable to God, that it makes them safe and secure. When they slip into sin, they feel that they can ask God for forgiveness and that He will forgive them. They just feel that God would never reject them. But note something, the most critical fact; God does not accept us because we hear and know the Word nor because we confess our sins. Each of these are necessary and very important, but they are not enough. God accepts us because we confess and repent. "*Repentance*" means that we turn away from our sin and turn to God. God accepts us because we turn to Him and live for Him. When we believe God—really believe Him—then we trust and follow Him, and do exactly what He says. There is a need for obedience.

1:23 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:— If a person does not practice doing the Word of God, it is like seeing the same reflection in the mirror, nothing changed. This comes from failing to apply the Word of God to your life.

1:24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. If a person does not practice operating the Word of God, what he did hear or learn will soon fade away from memory; it's just forgotten,

never becomes a part of the person's life! How many times has this happen where, we might hear the Word of God and are convicted of some defect, some shortcoming, some failure that we need to clean up? But as soon as we walk out from under the Word, we are distracted by the world and its affairs and we soon forget to do what the Word tells us to do?

1:25 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. On the other hand, the person who hears and does the Word of God is blessed. The Word of God is called the "*perfect law of liberty*." This means that the Word of God will set a person free from the bondages of sin and death. The Word of God will free a person from all the temptations of this life and give him the full and victorious life for which his soul longs for. The law of liberty sets a man free to know to fellowship with God forever and ever. The only thing is that we must continue in the Word of God which is the perfect law of liberty to be free. It is there for us, we just have to continue doing what it says, not forgetting what we've heard, but doing the work we've heard. We can't help but be blessed!

James 1:26-27 True Religion

1:26 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. The word "*religious*" describes a person who gives great attention to religion. Like the Jews who were the first and thought they were acceptable to God because they are religious, their religion was vain. And those that seem to be religious and not restrain their tongue are deceived in their own hearts, and they are vain. No matter what he thinks or professes to be, this tells us right here that their religion is empty. He does not please God. You can be very faithful in your religious worship and service, but be loose with the tongue. Our conversation has to be right and line up with the Word of God, and not loose.

- interrupting and dominating the conversation and telling tales
- criticizing and murmuring
- engaging in suggestive and off-colored talk
- being easily provoked and lashing out at others
- judging and condemning others
- talking about and running down others.
- gossiping
- using slang and cursing

No matter what a person thinks; no matter how religious he is, if he does not bridle his tongue, he deceives himself. His religion is empty. For a person to withstand and conquer temptations, he must bridle his tongue.

1:27 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. James says to practice pure religion: visit the needy: the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Whatever their need is God expects us to reach out to them. The task is not really difficult, we just have to take the time to do it. Some churches have teams that go out and visit with certain families that are on their lists to pray for and help. They are making the impossible possible. Charity is apart of our helping others.

- Pure religion is undefiled religion. It does not become corrupted with false beliefs or with false religion. It holds to the purity of the gospel, the Word of God.
- Pure religion does not focus upon form and ritual and ceremony. It focuses upon the power of God to change lives eternally and it reaches out to change people's lives by visiting them.
- Pure religion does not become morally corrupt. It does not become entangled with the affairs and pleasures of this world.

...and keep yourself unspotted from the world. True religion stirs people to separate themselves from the things of this world that arouse their fleshly desires and cravings. True believers keep themselves unspotted from the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

SUMMARY:

Following these admonitions to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath will put us in right order to overcome temptations, thereby hearing God speak first. Doing the word supersedes just hearers only. There is a religion that seems to be right in our own eyes, however, if we fail to bridle our tongue, it is in vain and we deceive ourselves. There concludes a difference between religion that is useless and that which is pure and undefiled before God (19-27).

APPLICATION:

It's like being OO7—committed to action by hearing and doing the Word of God. We have to make the commitment.