

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

JAMES 1:19-27, FAITH TEST 1: THE WORD OF GOD

A. Conditions for growth (19 - 21)

1. Water the Word (19 - 20), ***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.***
 - a. Note
 - 1) *Know this* may be translated, *This you know*, it is understood information.
 - 2) 1 John 2:21, *I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.*
 - b. Promote growth in the Word
 - 1) Eagerly listen
 - a) Ways to develop a *quick to hear* attitude toward God's Word
 - 1] Take advantage of opportunities to hear the Word: audio cassettes, Sunday School, worship services special conferences; personal study.
 - 2] Be open to the instruction of others. Manton rightly said, *There is no one too old, no one too wise, no one too high to be taught.*
 - 3] Prayerfully prepare for hearing God's Word.
 - b) A warning to teachers by John Newton, *When weariness begins, edification ends.*
 - 2) Don't prematurely teach
 - a) Thomas Manton, *do not rashly give your opinion about things concerning the faith.*
 - b) James 3:1, *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*
 - 3) Don't respond angrily
 - a) Anger is foolish, Proverbs 14:29, *Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.*
 - b) Anger is not productive
 - 1] *righteousness of God* is what He wants to develop in us.
 - 2] Philip Hughes, *An angry spirit is never a listening, teachable spirit.*
 - c) Anger is far inferior to self-control, Proverbs 16:32, *Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*
 2. Weed your life (21), ***Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.***
 - a. Remove hindrances to spiritual growth (21a)
 - 1) *filthiness*, moral defilement which chokes the Word of God in the lives of believers, 1 Peter 2:1-2.
 - 2) *rampant wickedness*, those things which have not been weeded.
 - 3) Thomas Manton, *It is only a sorry exchange to give the eternal welfare of the soul for a temporary reward from the world.*
 - b. Give the Word proper attention (21b)
 - 1) *receive with meekness the implanted word*
 - a) James 1:18, *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*
 - b) Accept it humbly since it is received by God's will not by man's merit.
 - 2) The Word of God delivers what anger can't.
 - a) *save your souls*
 - 1] Here it looks back to verse 20, *the righteousness of God.*
 - 2] It produces righteousness in the lives of believers.
 - b) The salvation in view is sanctification not justification.

B. The priority of obedience (22 - 25)

1. Listening to God's Word without obeying is spiritual deception (22), ***But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.***
 - a. A. T. Robertson, *Such a man does not delude anyone but himself.*
 - b. Thomas Manton, *Listening without acting brings greater judgment on you.*
 - c. Romans 2:13, *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*
2. Description of a hearer who is not a doer (23 - 24), ***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.***
 - a. *if*, a first class condition of fact - this is not a suggestion.
 - b. Mirror represents the Word of God revealing our old and new natures.
 - 1) 2 Cor. 3:18, *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*
 - 2) 1 Cor. 13:12, *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*
 - c. The problem with the hearer is that he does not practice what he has heard and is in danger of losing the truth he already knows, Matthew 25:29, *For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.*
3. Description of a hearer who is a doer (25), ***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.***
 - a. A doer hears and obeys the Word of God.
 - 1) *the perfect law of liberty* sets those who persevere free from slavery to sin.
 - a) Romans 8:2, *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*
 - b) Romans 6:17-18, *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*
 - 2) He acts on what he hears.
 - a) It affirms his justification, Romans 2:13, *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*
 - b) He *perseveres*, keeps doing, not content with only hearing.
 - b. A doer is blessed in his doing.
 - 1) 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
 - 2) John 13:17, *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*
 - 3) Philip Hughes, *He has become part of a God-created process in which knowledge followed by obedience brings more knowledge.*

C. A test of obedience through a 3-part personal examination (26 - 27)

1. Self-Control - your tongue (26), ***If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.***
 - a. 1st class condition of fact, again, not a suggestion.
 - b. Why such an emphasis on the tongue?
 - 1) What is proclaimed by the tongue is produced in the heart, Matthew 12:34, *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*
 - 2) Lehman Strauss, *A true test of man's religion is not his ability to speak but rather his ability to bridle his tongue.*

- c. Self-control is a gift, 2 Timothy 1:7, *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*
 - d. Self-control is to be exercised, 2 Peter 1:5-8, ... *make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
2. Service - your feet and hands (27a), ***Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction,***
- a. Note on *religion that is pure and undefiled*
 - 1) It is free from merit but full of grace.
 - 2) This is not a definition of religion but an illustration of the right spirit which leads to such acts.
 - b. An example of true religion with a focus on others
 - 1) *to visit orphans and widows in their affliction*
 - a) Acceptable religion centers on serving those in need, Mark 10:45, *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*"
 - b) Philip Hughes, ...*our care for the needy must not just be by supporting social programs or through the hands of others-but personally.*
 - 2) A proper motivation for visitation is to give help whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual.
3. Separation - your heart (27b), ***and to keep oneself unstained from the world.***
- a. An example of true religion with a focus on oneself
 - 1) We are called to be holy, set-apart from the ways of the world.
 - 2) 1 Peter 1:15, *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.*
 - 3) 2 Timothy 2:22, *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*
 - b. Am I having greater impact on the world than it is having on me?

CONCLUSION

- A. Can the Word of God grow in my life? Don't forget to water and weed.
- B. Is my life characterized by hearing instead of doing? Obey what you know.
- C. Does my life pass the test for true religion? Keep your tongue under control, have feet and hands that serve others and guard your heart from defilement by the world.