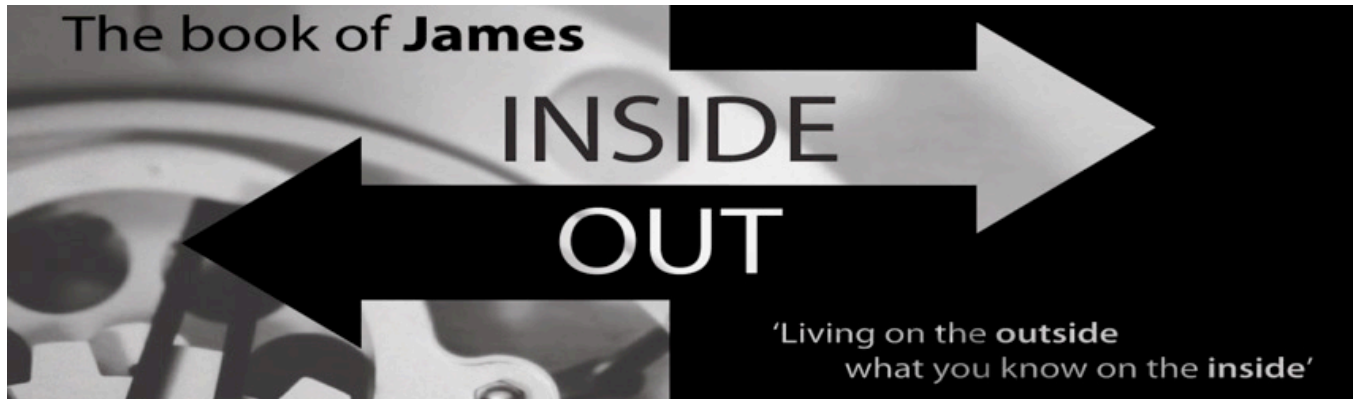


James 1:19-27 Inside Word Outside Obedience



I know some sisters who have fallen prey to the late night TV infomercials for exercise equipment. They now have a collection of items. They probably enough to start their own gym. But the problem is that it is not enough to own exercise equipment you got to do something with it.

This is what James is on about and why we have called our series on James Inside Out – Living on the outside what you know on the inside. James is on about doing something with what you know about Jesus.

He is saying it is not enough to know something about God you have to do act on what you know. He is not about being informed but transformed. It is not about being charmed by sermons but changed by them.

In James 1:19-27 tells us that:-

We are to humbly accept the Word planted in us by doing what it ways.

So firstly let's look at:-

1. The Implanted Word

Read: 1:21

Verse 21 is a summary verse for this section. James talks about the word planted in us. James is saying there is something that has happened to make us different people.

What is that? Read 1:18

There is a prior work of grace. A work done by God. To make us Christians. He chose to give us birth. He chose to give people who were dead because of their sin life ie a relationship with him through Jesus. This came about through the 'word of truth' of the Gospel of Jesus. The Gospel is the good news of Jesus. The news is that Jesus died to take the punishment for our sin.

James is talking about Christian living which is in response to what God has done. You need to know what God has done for you before you can respond to it. We do not live to please God to be accepted but because we have been accepted. We do not obey to be accepted but because we have been accepted.

So we are to accept the Word that has already been implanted in us. How do you accept something you already have?

It is a bit like oxygen in our bodies. You have it but you need to keep getting it into you. You have to keep breathing to stay alive. James is saying breath. You have the word in you but you need to keep getting it into you to keep alive in your relationship with God.

How do you do this? You are to Humbly Accept Word. We are to accept what God is saying to us without disputing it. By simply saying yes to what God teaches and commands. Firstly though if you haven't already you need to make sure you have new birth by the word of Gospel.

James says if you have the word of truth you will do what it says.

2. Do what it says

Read: 22-24

James wants us to listen but not merely listen. We are to listen and act on what we hear. James says if merely listen we are self deceived. The self deception is thinking you're a Christian when you are not. You think you are a Christian because you are in church listening to a sermon but you are not because you are not doing what God says through the week. You assent to God but you are not doing what he says. Someone who is a Christian is someone who listens to God and does what he says.

Jesus says in John 13:17:- "Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you DO them." The blessing comes in the DOING not the KNOWING.

James uses the illustration of a mirror to make his point. He says someone who doesn't do what God says is someone who hears and doesn't act is like someone who looks in the mirror and as they go away and forget what they look like. So they couldn't even pick themselves out in a Police line up.

What do you look in the mirror for? Firstly to remind yourself what you look like. Secondly to see if anything is out of place or to see if there is something wrong. You check to make there is no jam on your face after you've eaten breakfast in the morning. I check to see there isn't any stops I missed when I shaved.

I don't think James is saying it is a problem of memory. It is a problem of priority. It is a bit like when you ask your child to make their bed. You come back a few minutes later and it isn't done. They respond by saying they forgot. It is more likely that they chose to forget. They were distracted because making the bed is just not as important as playing with the toys in the room.

SO it is with us. The Bible is the mirror. Firstly you look into it to remind yourself who you are. You belong to Jesus. God has Implanted word in you and given you new birth. You are a Child of god. Secondly to see if there anything is out of place. Either in your thinking. In your living. Or in your behaviour.

We don't act on what we discover is wrong about ourselves in God's Word because it is not a priority. There are other things we are thinking about and acting on. James says if we are like this we are deceived.

What are we to do in response? DO WHAT IT SAYS.

Next James says that the only way you know what God is saying is if you continually intently look into it.

3. Continually look intently into the Word

Read: 25

Rather than a quick glance, the doer of the word looks intently at it. The Greek word means to stoop and look carefully at something. Just like you do when you are speaking to a child. You make an enough to get down on their level so you look them in the eye and speak to them. It takes effort. It is not going to help you to spend a few moments reading a few words. Just flopping open the Bible and looking for a quick word for the day.

As you look intently at the word, ask God first to help you understand what it meant to the original readers. You can't apply a text that you do not properly understand. Then ask Him how it applies to your life, not just outwardly, but on the heart level.

We are to do this Continually. The man who has the word implanted continues to look intently in the word.
CONTINUALLY.

Bill was one of the blokes I used to ride in a group with in Sydney. We used to cycle together two or three times a week. Bill was always faster and stronger than anyone else in the group. I discovered after while that this was because that he would also ride to and from work each day. He did a lot more riding than we did. It is no wonder that he was faster and stronger. He was continually and intently cycling.

There are those Christians that are more mature than we are. You'll discover that it would be because they are continually and intently in the Bible.

Even though I preached last week on asking God for wisdom in trials I didn't listen to God myself. It is only earlier this week when I was reading 1 Kings 3 and read about Solomon asking for wisdom that I realised God was saying to me that I should ask for wisdom. So I stopped and asked. It was only because I was continually and intently into the Bible. It takes a lot to get through my thick head.

As you think about your Bible reading would you say you continually look intently into the word of truth? Some of you are struggling in your Christian life. Some of you are stale and stagnant in your Christian. Some of you are feeling distant from Jesus. A symptom of this is feeling disconnected from church. If you feel distant from God you'll feel disconnected from God's people. This is simply because of you are dehydrated. You are suffering malnutrition. You are not continually looking intently into God's Word. You read in fits and spurts.

Again do what the word of truth says. Continually intently look into it. Make a decision now to start this afternoon to do it. Pick up your Bible open to James and read it through. Ask what do I learn about God the Father or God the Son? What do I learn about people or myself?

In order to humbly accept the Word James says we are also to:-

4. Get rid of

Read: 1:21

It is important to realize that James is addressing church going people. He is not writing to pagans, but to those who regularly hear the word of God. Probably, they took some comfort in the fact that they often heard the word. That put them a notch above those pagans who never attend church! They had been baptized. They took communion. They attended church. They didn't steal or murder or commit adultery. But James cuts through the veneer to the heart! He is talking to Christians. He is talking to us. This is who we are. This is what our lives are in them.

He uses the analogy of getting dressed. He says put off moral filth and evil. Moral filth is everything that soils or devalues our lives. Evil is everything that might be wrong in our character or conduct. For example greed, gossip, selfishness, pride, self-righteousness, lying cheating, stealing, coveting, dishonouring parents

Remember Jesus teaching about the farmer sowing the seed. There was seed sown among thorns that choked the plant. James is saying Get rid of the weeds in the garden.

Belinda has just put some garden beds and plants in our backyard. It wasn't long before weeds appeared. I went to spoke to an expert at a nursery and they if you are going to have a garden you are going to have weeds. So it living as Christian. If you are going to live as a Christian there is always going to sin lurking in our hearts that we need to put to death. That we need to get rid of. So get rid off everything that is wrong in our lives.

James goes on to give a few examples of doing looks like to humbly accept the Word.

5. What will it look like?

Read it: 19, 26

Are you quick to listen? Do you care? Or are you thinking about your response before the person has finished what they are saying? I know of someone who knew he was so bad that he used to put his hands a long the side of his head when he was talking to someone so he wouldn't be distracted. If you're not sure ask someone. Ask them do I listen to you?

Are you slow to speak? Do you pause? Do you ever say I'll get back to you on that? Do you talk too much? I know I have failed in this with some of you. I know because you helpfully pointed it out. It meant I was able to go to someone to ask for help in how I could change.

Are you slow to become angry?

James assumes we will get angry and allows for right anger. But let's face it our anger is generally loaded with self importance, self assertion, intolerance or stubbornness.

Ask someone. Do you think I get angry quickly? Do you feel as though you have to be careful what you say so that you don't set me off?

In v.27 James talks about pure religion. James is not talking about religion that is about doing good things to be accepted by God. It is biblical religion that is true worship of God in right response to being accepted by God.

James says it is **looking after orphans and widows**. In other words caring for those in need. It is not enough to be caring for those you are primarily meant to care for. For example your family. It's assumed you'll do that. You have other responsibilities as well. It is not either/or it is both/and. It is not a luxury of those who are able but everyone. It is the poor in the Gospels who don't need to be told to give because they already do it.

Are you personally involved in caring for anyone in need at the moment? Have you done anything to help someone in need in the last week?

Will you do something this week? Not just throwing some money at a world aid organisation but also personally with someone in your life. Don't wait for a programme. When you find out about a need - ACT.

In v.27b James says that pure and undefiled religion is **"to keep oneself unstained by the world."** The world being the thinking and lifestyle of people in rebellion to God. As God's people, we are to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. We are not to join monasteries to keep ourselves from being tainted by this evil world. Sometime we are not tainted because we have disobeyedly removed ourselves so we have no relationships with people who are not Christians. There's not a chance of being polluted by the polluted river because you've never swum in it.

We are to be in the world but are not to embrace the world's goals, priorities and values. We are to go into the world and befriend sinners, as Jesus did, and not be stained by their evil thinking and evil deeds.

That's a few examples of what it looks like to humbly accept the Word planted in us by doing what it ways.

In response to what you have heard today don't be like the lady who shook hands with the pastor after the service one Sunday morning. "That was a wonderful sermon," she exclaimed, "just wonderful! Everything you said applies to someone I know."