

James 2

Dr. David Shaw

James 1:18-27

What is a Christian? Are you a Christian because you have made a profession of faith? Are you a Christian because you have prayed a prayer? Are you a moral person who doesn't drink or smoke or sleep around? Is a Christian defined by regular church attendance? I assume you know the Biblical definition. That leads us to a follow-up question. If you are a question, how is it that a Christian grows?

James gives us profound advice here.

1. THE BIBLE

The first thing James points to is that we are changing when we are interacting with the Word of Truth. The Bible is essential for us (18). He is saying that one way to know if someone is really a Christian is to observe his/her relationship to the Bible. For the Christian, the Bible is like food, air, and water.

ILL: If you are dying of thirst and someone gives you a glass of water, you don't look at it – you consume it. That should be our attitude toward the Bible.

Unfortunately, this does not characterize most Christians. Most Christians do not have a working worldview of Christianity. There is no love for prayer, little love for time in study of the Word, no desire for fellowship. WHAT FEEDS YOUR SOUL? WHAT IS YOUR PRACTICAL PLAN FOR FEEDING YOUR SOUL?

2. ANGER

Our overarching principle in James is that the outward and inward are connected. The way you treat people is the way you think God treats you. The way you interact with others reveals much about your heart. You cannot isolate your life into component parts to manage them.

Look at vs. 19, 20. Anger has everything to do with the way we do/don't receive the Word. Notice that he does not say "don't get angry." Instead, he says **be slow to anger.** What's the difference? Anger is energy released to defend. This is not de facto bad. Anger at sin is good. One indicator that anger is bad is that it is quick. Another symptom of bad anger is that it leads you to do something you regret. That is what James means when He says "**the anger of man does not produce the**

righteousness that God requires.” Anger is good if it leads you to do well, to do the right thing.

What would you guess is the opposite of anger? HUMILITY. James writes, **“Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word.”** The problem with anger is PRIDE.

Inner anger is bitterness and outer anger is blowing up at people. Anger is a cancer that has a vital relationship between listening and behavior. Listening and accepting what others say means that you are willing to open yourself up to the possibility that you must bear some responsibility for being wrong.

Within ourselves, we believe that we are either a moral failure or completely loved and right. The Gospel says that both are true. Angry people do not like the Gospel truth – that you are a totally loved moral failure. Do you see how anger works in this? If you are angry, irritable, and bitter – then you cannot allow the Word of God in your life? There is no room for humility.

By hearing the life-giving Word, energies of the new-nature are stimulated into action. Therefore, we must be **quick to hear**. It would be prudent to ask: “What are the early warning systems of a prideful life?

- A. Any belief, if it is mine, is a major belief. A proud heart argues about everything. It is not teachable – it is argumentative
- B. A proud heart either enjoys confronting or avoids confronting, but never confronts with compassion
- C. A proud heart is always unhappy with its life. This person is always gripping about how his/her life is going

3. DOING/BEING

Listening is not enough. You also have to do. James explains to us what it means to be “doers of the Word.” He uses the analogy of a mirror. Made of polished metal, they were not as good as today, but they were very functional. There is something in our hearts that does not want to know what God really sees.

ILL: We can understand this when we think of anorexic. The anorexic person looks in the mirror and sees a size 8 but is actually a size 18. She lacks an accurate view.

Our hearts are allergic to truth. What is the reality of things? The gospel, which says that you are wicked than you ever realized, but at the same time more loved and excited, IS REALITY. One thing that is fatal to me is having the attitude is that I can

handle life by myself, even my Christian life. That I can be the sole responsible person to keep this gospel truth intact. The opposite is likewise true. I have to have others to help me get on and make progress.

So many people don't like being accountable to anyone. If we are not even accountable to the Word, how are we going to be accountable to each other? Unfortunately, not many of us attend to it with diligence, preparation, prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts and practice it in our lives.

Most people make a very great distinction between doctrine and practice. THE BIBLE DOES NOT. How we think comes out in how we act. How we act reveals how we think. Doctrine has to be practical and practice has to be doctrinal.

James says that if you will do this, YOU WILL BE BLESSED. You might remember that after God brought His people out of slavery, He then gave them the law. He didn't bring them out of slavery to put them into slavery. The law of God is the LAW OF LIBERTY.

If you look at the Bible and try to do what it says you will be immediately frustrated. But if you focus on God and BEING who He wants you to BE, you will notice that DOING flows out of BEING.

4. THE SUMMARY

The rest of the book will help us with these last verses, so we will only touch on them in conclusion. The way you treat others is a true indicator of what is going on in your life. Inward drives outward. Root brings forth fruit. Ministry that garners praise and attention and is done in the limelight is one thing. Ministry to those who have no ability to return the favor; ministry done in private; ministry that occurs in secret is something that can only come from one place. INSIDE. How much like Jesus is that?