

Sunday Morning Message

November 7, 2021

Putting Your Faith to Work – Study of The General Epistle of James

Building Your Faith Through The Bible

Text – James 1:16 - 27

Congregational Reading – James 1:16 - 27

Introduction

We have been taking our time going through the General Epistle of James, and so far we have learned that Christians are going to go through two types of temptations. The first type of temptation James talks about are what we call trials or tests. These are the difficult challenging situations that we all face in life that can sometimes shake our faith in God. James tells us that we will need God's wisdom if we are going to be able to survive these difficult and sometimes painful ordeals.

In the last message we discussed a second kind of temptation, which has to do with being tempted or induced to do something that's wrong. God makes it clear that there are certain activities or behaviors that He wants us to avoid. Our old, Adamic nature has no problem violating God's will regarding these things, but with God's help, we can be victorious in the battle against yielding to these sinful desires or lusts. God wants to keep us away from sin because He knows that sin will destroy us, and it will also ruin our effectiveness of glorifying Him and reaching the world for Christ.

Transition

Today, we are going to see what James has to say about the role that the Bible has to play in helping us to put our faith to work. The overall theme of this Letter is the practical application of faith – putting our faith to work. The Bible – the Word of God – contains the instruction manual that tells us how we are supposed to behave in this world, and it also supplies the spiritual nourishment and strength that we will need in order to be spiritually healthy.

The passage and message for today will show us how to build our faith through what we receive from the Bible. The level of our faith – our growth in faith - will be in direct proportion to the time that spend in the Bible:

"(17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

We start with the verse that we finished with last week:

"Do not err, my beloved brethren." (James 1:16)

I believe this verse ties in perfectly with the passage before it dealing with temptations, but it also provides a perfect bridge into this new discussion regarding the role the Bible in our Christian walk.

I. Receive the Word of God (vs. 17 – 21)

"... receive with meekness the engrafted word," (v. 21)

A. The Bible is a Gift from God (v. 17)

"(17) Every good gift (δόσις – dosis) and every perfect gift (δώρημα – dōrēma) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

Wiersbe said: "Everything good in this world comes from God. If it did not come from God, it is not good. If it comes from God, it must be good, even if we do not see the goodness in it immediately."¹

It is said by some that this verse may have come from an early Christian hymn.²

It is interesting that the Greek contains two different words for gift (δόσις – *dosis*, and δώρημα – *dōrēma*). According to McArthur: The "two different Gr. words for "gift" emphasize the perfection and inclusiveness of God's graciousness. The first denotes the act of giving, and the second is the object given. Everything related to divine giving is adequate, complete, and beneficial."³

Gifts can be special because of what is given, and because of who gave it. It can also be special just because it was given.

Illustrate – My wife and I received a little card from our grandchildren in Texas for Grandparents Day, It's just a card; worthless to most, but very valuable to us.

Cometh down – (καταβαῖνον from καταβαίνω – *katabainō* – Present Active Participle) – the gifts keep coming down.

God is the *Father of Lights* –

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 343–344.

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1875.

³ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1927.

"(5) This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

God has perfect vision and clarity. He sees everything, and He doesn't even need to turn on the flashlight app on his iPhone.

Notice also - *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. Because God is transcendent and dwells outside of eternity, He does not need to change. He knows the beginning and the end. The principles contained in this Book are eternal principles. We do not need periodic updates or revisions.

"(8) Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Because God is God, He knows exactly what good gifts we need, and He keeps on giving them to us. The specific gift that God refers to here is the Bible.

Wiersbe points out that David forgot about and neglected the many gifts of God when he took Bathsheba:

If King David had remembered the goodness of the Lord, he would not have taken Bathsheba and committed those terrible sins. At least this is what Nathan the prophet told the king. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things' " (2 Sam. 12:7–8). Note the repetition of the word *give* in this brief statement. God had been good to David, yet David forgot God's goodness and took the bait.⁴

B. This Gift Has Saved Us (v. 18 & 21)

"(18) Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. ... (21c) which is able to save your souls." (James 1:18, 21c)

Salvation can only come through the Word of God illuminated by the Spirit of God. That is what Jesus meant when He said that a person must be born of the "water and the Spirit" when He was speaking with Nicodemus in John 3. I believe the water there is a reference to the Word of God.

"(23) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

⁴ Wiersbe, 344.

C. This Gift Will Save Us (vs. 19 – 21)

"(19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: (20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (21) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:19-21)

1. We need to listen to what it says (vs. 19 – 20)
2. We need to continuously apply it to our lives (v. 21)

The Bible not only will save our souls from eternal damnation, but it will also save our lives from ruinous mistakes, and save our effectiveness in our representation of the Lord.

Filthiness has to do with moral defilement.

Superfluity if naughtiness – literally means abundance of wickedness, or evil – a desire to injure or break laws.

McGee states: I believe the Word of God is the greatest preventative against the sins of the flesh. The old Scottish preacher said, "Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin." He was certainly accurate in that. James is speaking to those who have been saved. You have received the implanted ("engrafted") Word—it has been planted in your hearts. The Word has already brought salvation to you, but you have a life to live as a Christian. Salvation is in three tenses: I have been saved (penalty of sin); I am being saved (power of sin); I shall be saved (presence of sin). James is speaking here of salvation in the present tense.⁵

II. React to the Word of God (vs. 22 – 25)

We cannot just keep receiving the Word of God without also reacting to it. The Word of God will change who we are and what we do. James illustrates this point with the illustration of a person who looks into a mirror. Women especially like to spend time in front of a mirror applying makeup. The mirror reveals things that need to be fixed. We check our hair, we examine our teeth, we look for things that need to be improved upon.

The Bible is like that mirror, only it looks deeply into our souls and spots flaws in our lives and in our behavior that need to be yielded to the will of God. The Bible sees what we cannot see ourselves.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 639.

"(12) For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:12-13)

According to the passage in Hebrews, the Bible not only sees imperfections on the surface of our lives, but it is also like an X-Ray machine in that he reveals our thoughts and intents, or motives.

III. Religious Activities Influenced by the Word of God (vs. 26 – 27)

In these last two verses, James explains that pure religion is not about ceremonies and rituals, which is what most people associate with it. To the Old Testament Jew, religious activity meant that he participated in the sacrificial system, giving his offerings for sin. He also observed the Sabbaths and attended the services at the synagogue. He would also observe all of the yearly traditions, such as the Passover, the Feasts of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, etc.

For the New Testament Christian, religious activity would mean being baptized and uniting in membership with a local church. It would include going to church regularly and giving tithes and offerings. It may even involve serving within the church as an usher or teacher or in some other way. These are all good things, but James states that God is just as concerned about how our religion affects our everyday lives. If you go to church every week and still live Monday through Saturday like a lost person then, according to James, you are not really religious at all.

A. True religion will Influence your Words. (v. 26 – see also chapter three)

Notice that James says that supposed religion that does not include a controlled tongue is useless – it's vain.

B. True Religion will Impact the People of the World. (v. 27a)

James will also specifically talk about how to treat the poor people from within the congregation in chapter two.

C. True Religion will also Insulate you from the Problems of the World (v. 27b)

These are all illustrations or examples of how the Bible will change your life and influence real religious activity in your life.

Conclusion

True religion – real faith – will dramatically impact the way we live every day. Christianity is not something we observe on Sunday; it is who we are every day of our lives. The Bible is a huge factor in our Christian experience.

It was the Bible that revealed to us our sin and need for a Saviour.

It was the Bible that showed us who the Saviour is.

It was the Bible that showed us how to receive the gift of eternal life that the Saviour offers to us.

It is the Bible that will show us what to do and how to live after we are saved.

Questions – How important is the Bible to you? How much time do you spend reading and studying the Word of God? You cannot be successful in the Christian life without receiving healthy doses of Scripture on a regular basis.

"(8) This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Joshua 1:8)

We need to spend time daily in this Book.