

The Power of God's Word

- James 1:17-27

I. The Changing Power

a. It Changes Our Talk (vv.19-20)

i. One of the things that James alludes to here in the latter part of chapter 1 is the power of God's Word on our life & how it has the ability to change us.

1. When you & I take God's Word, we read it, and then we apply it to our lives, something miraculous happens as it begins to change us if we are receptive.
2. It will change our conduct, it will change our conversation, and it will change our character.
3. This is why we call this Bible the "Living Bible", because it is alive as it works in & through us.

ii. James clearly understood that one of the great struggles in our lives is how we respond to others, and so he begins v.19 by encouraging us to, "**let every man be swift to hear**".

1. The art of listening is one that we all need to acquire.
2. The Lord Jesus often used this expression: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He used the expression seven times while on earth ([Luke 8:8](#); [Matt. 11:15](#); [13:9](#), [43](#); [Mark 4:23](#); [7:16](#); [Luke 14:35](#)) and eight times from heaven ([Rev. 2:7](#), [11](#), [17](#), [29](#); [3:6](#), [13](#), [22](#); [13:9](#)).

3. Most of us are poor listeners, so it would do us well to cling to James warning.

a. Samuel learned a great lesson from the aged priest Eli. One night, God called to Samuel. The boy thought that Eli had called him, and he ran to see what he wanted. After this same thing happened three times in a row, Eli instructed Samuel, "Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:1-10).

b. This was some good advice that we could learn from even today.

iii. This is great advice, but how can we learn the principle of being a good listener?

1. Be "slow to speak".

a. The life of Job

i. Job was so provoked by Zophar's first speech that he turned on him and said, "O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom" (Job 13:5). "If you would keep your mouth shut, somebody might make a mistake and think you were wise!"

b. When Jesus was brought before Pilate, you would have thought that He would have been quick to defend Himself, yet the Bible says He stood there & answered not a word.

i. Pilate knew perfectly well the innocence of his prisoner. He knew fully the motives and the malice of the Sanhedrin, and he knew where his duty lay.

ii. There was nothing for Jesus to say.

c. Nathan confronts David

i. When Nathan the prophet came to David with the story of the rich man who had stolen a poor man's one little lamb, David exploded, when he should have been slow to speak.

- ii. His anger "was greatly kindled," the Holy Spirit says. "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold," he blurted—and, in so doing, he condemned himself.
 - 2. James now moves on to the 2nd principle, be "slow to wrath".
 - a. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34).
 - b. The word for "wrath" here represents anger, or "temper." James adds an explanation. Losing one's temper can never achieve anything, least of all the righteousness of God in one's life.
 - i. "But isn't it right at times to be angry?" Sure, Jesus was angry when He entered the temple, right?
 - ii. James was warning us against bad temper.
- b. It Changes Our Walk (vv.21-22)**
 - i. James gives us some very big words that we need to dissect a bit and make sure we understand:
 - 1. The word for "filthiness" suggests dirt, filth, and impurity.
 - 2. The word for "superfluity" suggests "an exceeding measure," or something above and beyond the ordinary.
 - a. The picture is of an exceeding or great wickedness.
 - 3. The word for "naughtiness" refers to wickedness, depravity, and one's vicious disposition and desires. James says we are to wash our hands and our lives of these things.
 - ii. Paul puts it this way in Colossians 3:9-10 – "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"
 - iii. As you wrap all this together, we are in essence encouraged to lay down the "old man", the sinful man, the man who was once sold out to the world, and allow the Holy Spirit through the "engrafted" Word of God to change who you are & who you use to be.
 - 1. God's Word can change our talk,
 - 2. Our walk,
 - 3. Our attitude,
 - 4. Our dress,
 - 5. Even our desires and our heart.

II. The Doing Power

a. We Need To Hear ... (v.22)

- i. I got to be honest, this is where many drop the ball right here.
- ii. Many never allow the Word of God to make a real change in the life b/c they have never taken the time to "hear" or to listen or to even pick up God's Word.
- iii. As in other facets of our relationship with God, there has to be a willing cooperation on our part if the Word is going to change our lives.
 - 1. Some people read the Bible to admire it as magnificent literature.
 - 2. Some read it to justify their religiousness.
 - 3. Some read it in an attempt to prove I wrong.
 - 4. But for most, they just don't read it at all.

b. We Need To Be Doers.

- i. Nearly all of these ways or reasons for studying the Bible have their place. But over all of them James writes the words, "Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."
- ii. God's Word is not meant just to be read, it is meant for us to respond to.
 - 1. Over & over again, God calls for our obedience after Him & His Word.
 - 2. John 14:15 – "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

III. The Reflecting Power (vv.23-27)

a. Reflect Upon Yourself (vv.23-24)

- i. One of the mistakes that James doesn't want us to make is to read the scriptures & never look at our own lives.
 - 1. Each time we read the Word of God, each time we come into His presence, each time we come to worship Him in this place ... our prayer should be, "Lord change me."
- ii. Folks come, they hear the preached Word, the Holy Spirit even convicts their sinful heart, yet they choose not to respond. This is exactly the type of warning James is laying out here for us.
 - 1. What kind of person would we be if we woke up in the morning, got dressed, and never one time looked in the mirror to shave or comb our hair or put on makeup?
 - 2. The purpose of a mirror is not only for us to see any imperfections, but to see so we can change them.
 - a. II Cor. 3:18 – "But we all, with unveiled face giving back as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord who is the Spirit."
 - 3. You see, God's Word not only shows us who Jesus is, but it places within our own hearts the desire to be more like Him.

b. Reflect Upon Your Behavior (vv.25-27)