

WORSHIP SERVICE - 1.22.2023

FEASTING ON GOD'S WORD - PART 4

I. INTRODUCTION

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

1. OBSERVATION - WHAT DOES IT SAY?
2. INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
3. APPLICATION - WHAT DO I DO?

James 1:19-27

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 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. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 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.

26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

II. THE NECESSITY OF APPLICATION

- One of the things that is immediately impressed upon us as we read James' letter, is that true receiving and hearing of the Word must lead to a godly response and godly action.
- V19 It is not just a knowledge of right action, it's not enough to know that we must be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger—the knowledge of that right action actually has to work itself out in practice in the Christian life—we become people who are quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.
- We are to our former evil desires with a humble receptivity of God's Word.
- James calls it the "implanted word."
- The idea is God planting his revealed truth in our heart so that it can take root and spring up into a righteous life. (Deut 6:6; 30:14)
- This is the fulfillment of the New Covenant promise of Jer. 31 where God says he would write his law within his people, on their heart.
- The seed of the word of truth, planted in the soil of the human heart, flourishes in to a tree of life which James says is "able to save your souls."
- In what way does the Word save our souls?
- Humbly receiving the Word means to take it in and believe it. You believe everything concerning Christ and salvation.
- That gospel seed then springs up and begins its transformative work in your life.
- That is the power of the gospel to save you and sanctify you.
- To receive it means it is your ultimate authority for matters of faith, life and practice.
- Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).
- The implanted Word that is able to save your souls does not just come from hearing the word but also by doing the word.
- Don't just be a hearer of the word only—be a doer. It's a command.

A WARNING OF SELF-DECEPTION

- If there is no doing, then the word has not truly been received, if it is not put into practice.
- If you just hear the word and do not respond with the corresponding action of doing what the word is telling you to do, you deceive yourself.
- How do you deceive yourself?
- Two ways: First, there can be a sense of self-deception in that you can think its enough to just be reading and hearing the word and outwardly conform to Christian practice like reading your Bible and attending a church service.
- The listening must be accompanied by obedience.
- The gospel has the power to save and transform and put God's law on our heart, but it also contains a summons to obedience.
- John Calvin wrote, "Obedience is the mother of true knowledge of God."
- Apprehension of the word must be accompanied by application of the word.
- Second, someone can deceive themselves by cheating themselves out of the blessing of being a doer of the word.
- They are missing the opportunity to grow in their faith and increase in spiritual maturity.
- The spiritual habits formed by the consistent practice of the instruction and commands of Scripture shapes us. The one who only hears cheats himself out of that.

THE FORGETFUL HEARER VS THE PERSEVERING DOER

- The one who only hears is like one who looks at himself in a mirror and then goes away forgetting what he was like.
- The point James is making with this illustration is that the one who hears only gets no more lasting benefit from the word than the person who looks at their face in the mirror while brushing their hair.
- The effect of looking is temporary, it has no lasting impact.
- Now he shifts the illustration and doesn't talk about the doer of the word looking into a mirror.
- The doer of the word is said to look "into *the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres...*"
- The action of the doer of the word shows that there is a continuing impact of the word in his life. He perseveres in it, he continues in it.
- What is the perfect law, the law of liberty?
- It cannot mean the Mosaic law, though some interpret it to mean that.
- James wrote that about the implanted word that is able to save (21), the Mosaic law does not do that.
- 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.
- He cannot now mean that the law mediates spiritual birth where only the gospel is what he said can do that. We are "brought forth by the word of truth..."
- The perfect law then is the gospel. In the gospel not only are we freed from the tyranny of sin, but the crushing demands of perfect obedience to the law and the curse imposed because of our transgression of the law.
- Jesus perfectly fulfilled all of the OT law God gave his people (Matt 5:17).
- By referring to the gospel as the perfect law, James is using this language to emphasize that the gospel also brings with it a demand for complete obedience.
- We're not saved by our obedience, we're saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-8).
- But what the gospel does is what God had promised by writing his law on our heart, we can now do it.
- We'll want to do it out of sheer gratitude for God's gracious gift of salvation through Christ.
- We'll want to do it because of God's enabling grace in our life.
- That's why he says a person who can't do what God tells them to do has a worthless religion and is deceived in his heart (26).

THE BLESSING OF DOING THE WORD

- But the one who is a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.
- James is not teaching salvation BY works but salvation FOR works.
- There is a blessing when we obey and do God's Word.
- Luke 11:28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"
- 1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.
- Matt 7:24-27 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."
- Make sure your reading and study of God's Word is accompanied by application of God's Word.
- You are blessed in your doing.

III. APPLICATION: WHAT DO I DO?

- What does it mean to apply Scripture?
- Apply comes from the Latin which means 'to fasten to,' 'attach,' or 'adhere.'
- To apply Scripture then is to fasten the truth of Scripture to your life and situation.
- It is doing something with Scripture whereby it has implications for your life.
- Applying Scripture by bringing it to bear on our life is a demonstration of our submission to the authority of Scripture.
- We are to put it into practice.
- Phil 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- In the process of interpretation, we are endeavoring to understand what the text means as the original audience understood it to mean.
- We never ask, "What does it mean to you?" But rather, "What did it mean to them?"
- Scripture can only have one meaning.
- But, Scripture can have many points of application for us once we understand its intended meaning.
- Application involves identifying how you will respond to God's Word after you have read, studied, observed, and interpreted Scripture.

THE TIMELESS, GENERAL PRINCIPLE

- Not everything in Scripture is an explicit command.
- This is why we need to do the work of observation and interpretation before we move to application.
- In order to apply Scripture we must draw from the text, through proper exegesis, the timeless, general principle found in the text.
- This is the most challenging part of the process but essential for proper application.
- The previous two steps observation and interpretation help us get to this timeless, general principle.
- In those steps we have already identified the differences between the original biblical audience and us.
- We know that we are separated by culture, language, time, and maybe even covenant.
- We've done the work to catalog those differences and now we can look at identifying some of the similarities with the original biblical audience and our life and situation to extract the timeless, general principle.

APPLICATION HELPS

General Outcomes of Applying Scripture

- **THINGS TO KNOW:**
- Truths that must be apprehended and believed.
- Everything in Scripture will teach us something about God, his nature, creation, humanity, etc.
- **THINGS TO DO:**
- Commands to obey.
- **THINGS TO PRAY FOR**
- Scripture contains an inexhaustible supply of things to pray for.
- **THINGS TO PRAISE GOD FOR**
- An endless stream of things to thank God for, to worship him for, to praise him for will come from your study and application of His word.

Applying different Genre of Scripture

- **Prophecy / Law / Wisdom Literature**--OT/NT draw out broad principles of the explicit commands.
- Is the command a duty I must perform? Is there something about my character I must change? Is there a certain aim I am to pursue? Am I being commanded to exercise discernment?
- When we understand a command as God meant us to understand it, our response would be to obey it gladly and wholeheartedly.
- **Narrative / History**—rich in application.
- Stories tell the story of redemption, they point to Jesus.
- Narrative calls us to a life of faith, reveals the character and work of God.
- We can learn from the exemplary faith of Bible characters.
- We can also learn from the less than exemplary faith of Bible characters.
- **Psalms and Prayers**—teach us how to pray, confess sin.
- They put words in our mouth that help us express our thoughts, longings, and feelings to God.
- **NT letters**—teach us doctrine.
- What does the doctrine reveal about God's character and his attributes?
- God's character shows the character we must seek and reflect.
- Teach us what is true, asserts truth. We are to accept and believe.
- "If this doctrine is true, what thoughts and actions must follow?"
- "How would this doctrine shape my life, thoughts, emotions, and actions if I truly believe it?"

Questions to help you discover application points

1. Sin to confess?
2. Promise to claim?
3. Attitude to change?
4. Command to obey?
5. Example to follow?
6. Prayer to pray?
7. Error to avoid?
8. Truth to believe?
9. Something praiseworthy?