

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: Quit kidding yourself: James 1:22-27

The emphasis in this section is on the dangers of self-deception: "deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22); "deceiveth his own heart" (James 1:26). If a Christian sins because Satan deceives him, that is one' thing. But if he deceives himself, that is a far more serious matter.

Many people are deceiving themselves into thinking they are saved when they are not. "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:22-23).

But there are true believers who are fooling themselves concerning their Christian walk. They think they are spiritual when they are not. It is a mark of maturity when a person faces himself honestly, knows himself, and admits his needs. It is the immature person who pretends, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17).

Spiritual reality results from the proper relationship to God through His Word. God's Word is truth (John 17:17), and if we are rightly related to God's truth, we cannot be dishonest or hypocritical. In these verses, James stated that we have three responsibilities toward God's Word; and if we fulfill these responsibilities, we will have an honest walk with God and men.

Receive the Word (James 1:19-21)

James calls God's Word "the engrafted word" (James 1:21), which means "the implanted word." Borrowing from our Lord's Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9,18-23), he compares God's Word to seed and the human heart to soil. In His parable, Jesus described four kinds of hearts: the hard heart, which did not understand or receive the Word and therefore bore no fruit; the shallow heart, which was very emotional but had no depth, and bore no fruit; the crowded heart, which lacked repentance and permitted sin to crowd out the Word; and the fruitful heart, which received the Word, allowed it to take root, and produced a harvest of fruit.

The final test of salvation is fruit. This means a changed life, Christian character and conduct, and ministry to others in the glory of God. This fruit might be winning souls to Christ (Romans 1:16), growing in holy living (Romans 6:22), sharing our material possessions (Romans 15:28), spiritual character (Galatians 5:22-23), good works (Colossians 1:10), and even praising the Lord (Hebrews 13:15). Religious works may be manufactured, but they do not have life in them, nor do they bring glory to God. Real fruit has in it the seed for more fruit, so that the harvest continues to grow fruit, more fruit, much fruit (John 15:1-5).

But the Word of God cannot work in our lives unless we receive it in the tight way. Jesus not only said, "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24), but He also said, "Take heed how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). Too many people are in that tragic condition in which "hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13). They attend Bible classes and church services but never seem to grow. Is it the fault of the teacher or the preacher? Perhaps, but it may also be the fault of the hearer. It is possible to be "dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:11) because of decay of the spiritual life.

If the seed of the Word is to be planted in our hearts, then we must obey the instructions James gives us.

Swift to hear (v. 19 a). "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:9) "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). just as the servant is quick to hear his master's voice, and the mother to hear her baby's smallest cry, so the believer should be quick to hear what God has to say.

There is a beautiful illustration of this truth in the life of King David (2 Samuel 23:14-17). David was hiding from the Philistines who were in possession of Bethlehem. He yearned for a drink of the cool water from the well in Bethlehem, a well that he had often visited in his boyhood and youth. He did not issue an order to his men; he simply said to himself, "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate" (2 Samuel 23:15). Three of his mighty men heard their king sigh for the water, and they risked their lives to secure the water and bring it to him. They were "swift to hear."

Slow to speak (v. 19 b). We have two ears and one mouth, which ought to remind us to listen more than we speak. Too many times we argue with God's Word, if not audibly, at least in our hearts and minds. "He that refraineth his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19). "He that hath knowledge spareth his words" (Proverbs 17:27). Instead of being slow to speak, the lawyer in Luke 10:29 argued with Jesus by asking, "And who is my neighbor?" In the early church, the services were informal; and often the listeners would debate with the speaker. There were even fightings and wars among the brethren James was writing to (James 4:1).

Slow to wrath (v. 19 c). Do not get angry at God or His Word. "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Proverbs 14:29). When the Prophet Nathan told King David the story about "the stolen ewe lamb," the king became angry, but at the wrong person. "Thou art the man," said Nathan, and David then confessed, "I have sinned" (2 Samuel 12). In the Garden, Peter was slow to hear, swift to speak, and swift to anger - and he almost killed a man ,with the sword. Many church fights are the result of short tempers and hasty words. There is a godly anger against sin (Ephesians 4:26); and if we love the Lord, we must hate sin (Psalms 97:10). But man's anger does not produce God's righteousness (James 1:20). In fact, anger is just the opposite of the patience God wants to produce in our lives as we mature in Christ (James 1:3-4).

I once saw a poster that read, "Temper is such a valuable thing, it is a shame to lose it!" It is temper that helps to give steel its strength. The person who cannot get angry at sin does not have much strength to fight it. James warns us against getting angry at God's Word because it reveals our sins to us. Like the man who broke the mirror because he disliked the image in it, people rebel against God's Word because it tells the truth about them and their sinfulness.

A prepared heart (v. 21). James saw the human heart as a garden; if left to itself, the soil would produce only weeds. He urged us to "pull out the weeds" and prepare the soil for the "implanted Word of God." The phrase "superfluity of naughtiness" gives the picture of a garden overgrown with weeds that cannot be controlled. It is foolish to try to receive God's Word into an unprepared heart.

How do we prepare the soil of our hearts for God's Word? First, by confessing our sins and asking the Father to forgive us (1 John 1:9). Then, by meditating on God's love and grace and asking Him to "plow up" any hardness in our hearts, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jeremiah 4:3). Finally, we must have an attitude of "meekness" (James 1:21). Meekness is the opposite of "wrath" in James 1:19-20. When you receive the Word with

meeekness, you accept it, do not argue with it, and honor it as the Word of God. You do not try to twist it to conform it to your thinking.

If we do not receive the implanted Word, then we are deceiving ourselves. Christians who like to argue various "points of view" may be only fooling themselves. They think that their "discussions" are promoting spiritual growth, when in reality they may only be cultivating the weeds.

Many of us are in spiritual poverty because we try to go it alone.

Although God has promised us all the strength and help we will every need. We will always need help because we are unaware of all the resources God has provided for us! God has character and if we belong to Him, His character ought to be in us!

It is not sufficient, however, to receive the Word; one must respond to it in active obedience. The command is clear, Do not merely listen to the Word...Do what it says. One must "become," or "keep on becoming", a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. The growing numbers of sermon-sippers who flit from one doctrinal dessert to another like helpless hummingbirds are deceiving themselves. "Deceiving" is from a verb used in the New Testament only here and in Col 2:4.

Deceived means "to cheat or deceive by false reasoning." The deception comes from thinking they have done all that is necessary when actually listening to the Word is only the beginning. A fitting illustration of the "sit, soak, and sour" crowd follows.

The one who listens and does nothing is like a man who glances at his face in a mirror and then forgets what he saw. It is interesting that James cited a man in this illustration. A woman would probably not give just a cursory glance, and if she saw a flaw she would probably do what she could to cover it or correct it. Not so this man who sees the "face of his birth" and then forgets about it.

To look into the mirror of the Word of God involves an obligation. One must look intently into the perfect Law that gives freedom. The intent and sustained look with a ready response is the key to spiritual strength and continued maturity. The word for "looks intently into" literally means "to stoop down" in order to have a good close look.

The "Law that gives freedom" seems like a paradox. Law seems to imply restraint and therefore a lack of freedom. Not so with God's Law. His perfect Law provides true freedom. "Hold to My teaching," Christ said, "then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). One who does what God decrees will find full liberty and will be blessed in what he does.

[But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only] Obey the gospel, and do not merely listen to it.

[Deceiving your own selves] It is implied here, that by merely hearing the word but not doing it, they would deceive their own souls. The nature of this deception was this, that they would imagine that that was all which was required, whereas the main thing was that they should be obedient. If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance on preaching, or a respectful attention to it, he has done all that is required of him, he is laboring under a most gross self-deception. And yet there are multitudes who seem to imagine that they have done all that is

demanding of them when they have heard attentively the word preached. Of its influence on their lives, and its claims to obedience, they are utterly regardless.

I. We can come out of Spiritual and Natural Poverty if we would just listen to the Holy Ghost.

1. He Speaks: Acts 13:2(While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.")

2. He teaches: St:John 14:26 (But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

3. Guides: St: John 16:13 (But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.)

4. He Convicts: St: John 16:7, 8 (But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

5. Commands: Acts 8:29 (The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it.")

6. He helps: Romans 8:26 (In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.)

7. He Comforts: St:John 14:26 (But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

God is everywhere, He is all knowing, He is all powerful, He inspired the Scripture.

II. It is God's word that saves us from sin and eternal damnation!

In Mark 11: 12-14 Jesus curses the Fig tree. One of the strange things about the Eastern Fig Tree is that the fruit appears before the leaves. Anyone seeing the fig tree having leaves would naturally expect to find fruit on it. This is what Jesus and His disciple expected to find. But finding none, Christ cursed or condemned the barren tree. This is a picture of a professing Christian giving the appearance of productiveness, but bearing no fruit.

III. Hearing causes one to react

^{EX 18:9} Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰ He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians.

^{PS 4:3} Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD will **hear** when I call to him.

Faith is a Necessity: Ephesians 2:8, 9

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Without Faith:

- **No Salvation**
- **No Justification:** Romans 3:28 (²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.)
- **No Access into Grace:** Romans 5:2 (² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.)

- **No Living: Romans 1:17** (¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith.")
- **No Standing: II Corinthians 1:24** (²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.)
- No Walking
- No Fighting
- No Overcoming
- No Pleasing God : Hebrews 11:6