

Sermon: **INSIDE / OUT: When Facing God's Truth – Part 2 - James 1:22-27**

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Give an example of when you were disobedient as a child (or as an adult).
What were the consequences?
2. Pastor Henry quoted the speaker who said, 'The single greatest cause of atheism in our world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips but walk out of the church doors and deny Him with their lifestyle.'
Have you experienced this personally? If so, how?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Read James 1:19. Note the three behaviours that James refers to in this verse.
How do these show what it means to 'respond in humility' (v. 21)?
What is significant about the sequence of these three responses?
2. The word 'deceive' is used two times (v.22, 26).
Why was James so concerned about self-deception with respect to the Word of God? How were the people in Ezekiel 33:30-32 deceiving themselves?
Think of ways that followers of Christ today often deceive themselves.
3. a) The author uses the phrases: 'righteous life that God desires' and 'religion that God our Father accepts.' (vv. 20, 27)
Make a list of the responses for which God is looking (vv.19-26).

b) What does James mean when he says '...he will be blessed...'? (v.25)
How does God bless us when we live the Word?
Share an example from your own experience.
4. Why is it often so difficult for a person to respond in obedience to the list in #3?
How does Psalm 90:12 give perspective to what it means to be obedient?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. How are you deceiving yourself? (refer back to #2)?
How do your actions stand up to James's practical faith?
2. Is there something that God has been speaking to you about that you are not doing? What is one step you can take this week to align your behaviour with His prompting? Write it down and share it with someone
3. What phrase / verse from this study can you meditate on this coming week in your journey of obedience?

UP – IN – OUT *reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

THE WORD (NIV)

Psalm 90:12

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Ezekiel 33:30-32

³⁰ "As for you, son of man, your people are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, 'Come and hear the message that has come from the LORD.' ³¹ My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. ³² Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

James 1:19-27

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. ²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Sermon Study Summary

James (1:19-27) instructs us to respond to the truth of God's Word with **humility** and **obedience**.

In our last study, we looked at Part 1: responding with **humility**, (James 1:19-21). This means that fully devoted followers of Christ must be: 1) open and receptive to what God wants to say through the Scriptures. 2) Slow to speak. 3) Slow to become angry when we hear Bible challenges to our lives.

In today's message we discuss Part 2: responding with **obedience**. James says *"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* (James 1:22). "Hearing and doing" go together.

Hearing (listening) alone isn't enough. "Listen" (verse 22) means "Audit", as in auditing a class. Auditing is good for getting information, but is useless unless we put it into practice. For example, a medical student will tell you that knowledge in a classroom is vital, but putting that knowledge into practice with real patients is indispensable to become fully qualified as a doctor. Pastor Schorr once heard a speaker say: "The single greatest cause of atheism in our world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips but walk out of the church doors and deny Him with their lifestyle." If we do this, we are like people in Ezekiel's day—they heard his message from the Lord, applauded him, but then went away and didn't put the words into practice (Ezekiel 33:30-31). We become evaluators of teaching, professional hearers of the Word. We miss the point: God gave His Word to align our lives with the Lord. We must do more than read Scripture, or hear it taught on Sundays. Otherwise we deceive ourselves. Deceiving ourselves is like looking in mirror, seeing all the dirt, zits or misplaced hair, and then going away without doing anything about it (James 1:23-24).

How might we deceive ourselves?

1. We might substitute Bible knowledge, sermons or Bible studies. While these activities are good in themselves, we may turn a blind eye to ministry opportunities in our workplace or community. Spiritual growth comes through putting God's truth into practice.
2. We can substitute emotional experience. If our spirits are stirred, leaving us feeling closer to the Lord, but we don't serve others the rest of the week, we deceive ourselves.
3. We substitute the emotional challenge of a sermon or conviction of a Bible verse. But being challenged is not the same as taking action. Nothing will change until we do what God is calling us to do.

Growth comes from HEARING word but also DOING the Word. James 1:26-27 gives us three questions as a litmus test to examine our spirituality. 1) Do I keep reign on my tongue? If we slander or say hurtful things, we don't represent Christ, but reveal an immature life of Christ. 2) Am I living a God-pleasing life? Am I developing the characteristics, values and mission of Christ? 3) Do I have compassion for and minister to the most vulnerable and needy, poor, or marginalized?

This litmus test is difficult and can make us uncomfortable. What might we be feeling as we listen to this message?

1. We may be unsure in our faith—wondering if our faith is real, or if we're doing enough to please God. In every religion outside Christianity, the only way to win God's acceptance is through doing good works or rituals. James says we can never earn God's favor through our own works. God reached out to us through Jesus' death and resurrection. Therefore our motivation for doing good works is in response to God's love and grace. We'll be active in our faith out of love for God.
2. We may feel overwhelmed, not having enough time. It's been said that, "You always have time to do what's most important to you." We need to ask ourselves: "How am I using time? What do I need to stop doing so I have the time margin to do what God is calling me to do? In the end, what will matter most?" Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom". God will give us wisdom to invest in things that will matter to us and to God.
3. We may feel inadequate, afraid of failure. For example, God asked Moses to lead people out of Egypt. "Who am I?" he asked God. What really mattered was *who God was*. "I will be with you and tell you what to say," God told him. "Just step out and trust Me." Jim Elliot, missionary to Aucas of Ecuador, graduated from college with highest honours, but couldn't speak the Auca language, couldn't thatch a roof, couldn't navigate a canoe in rapids. To the Aucas he was total loser. But he believed God was with him, and He trusted God to do what he couldn't do. Are you putting off something because you don't feel qualified? Truth is, we all are inadequate in what God is calling us to do. But He will do in and through us what we can't in our own strength. In our greatest fear, God shows up most powerfully and grows our faith. The choice is ours: we can shrink back and do lesser things, or move in a faith-filled adventure. Let this be our prayer: "Lord, here I am. I'm afraid of failure or being embarrassed. But my trust and confidence is in You. Guide me to the people you want me to minister to, the opportunities you want me to do." God will open up your steps if you open up your life.

As a result, James says (1:25) we will be blessed, fulfilled and satisfied. Others will come to faith in Christ or will be drawn closer to God because of us and our example.