

February 11, 2018

## ***"Consider it pure joy..."***

***"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 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."***

***"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says...If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this; to look after orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself from being polluted by the world."***

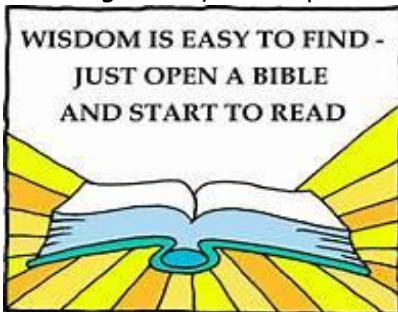
James 1:19-27

Human behavior has only two functional parts; attitude and action. What we think and believe fosters our attitudes and our attitudes are the source of all that we say and do. So, if we want to change our actions we have to change what we think and believe. That's all pretty easy to understand, but very hard to actually do.

Having shown us the difference between trial and temptation, James moves on to challenge us to change our attitudes and through that transformation to change our actions. The ultimate transformation for true believers is not just seen in what we believe, but also, and more to the point, has to be demonstrated through our words and deeds. So, James will write, ***"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says..."*** But, we might argue, God's word gives us so much direction how can we possibly live up to all that it teaches? James gives us clear direction.

First, James would tell us, ***"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."*** Learning to listen is the first challenge for those of us who want to experience the full transformation of the Holy Spirit.

Why is it so hard for us to listen? The human brain is much faster than the human mouth. So, when we are listening to instruction or direction, rebuke or correction, our minds outpace our ears. Nearly all of us are guilty of hearing only ten or twelve words from any source, before our mind begins to process our responses. Once our minds begin to process our responses we are no longer listening. Thus, more often than we would like to admit, we let loose a response, to often an angry response, shutting down all communication long before we actually hear any part of God's teaching. Our quick responses and quick anger keep us from changing our attitudes.



So, first we must learn to listen to God's instruction. In our world that very often requires that we also shut down the false teachings and misdirection flooding our lives. For true believers God's word is always to go-to source. We are, I think, all guilty of listening to for too many false teachings and misdirection.

Next we must apply what we hear to our own lives. Real change always begins with personal conviction. When we blame or justify we are not allowing ourselves to be convicted by the teachings of God's word. When we look in the mirror of God's word and see ourselves for who and what we really are and own our wrong attitudes, then we can begin to experience true transformation.

If we commit ourselves to listening to God's instruction, if we allow his words to personally convict us or our own wrong attitudes and actions, then we will finally be able to begin doing God's will. And, ultimately, it is all about doing God's will. What is that will?

As we noted earlier, James wants us to understand that God's will is very basic, so he concludes, ***"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this; to look after orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself from being polluted by the world."***

To do God's will is, in the end, completely defined in how we treat others. No matter what we might teach or preach, our practice is the real test of our faith. Our attitudes toward others demonstrated in our actions ultimately tell the world who we really are. ***"By this,"*** Jesus will teach us, ***"all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."***