

The Book Of James: Keeping It Real

James 1:22-25

James 1:22

(KJV) *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

(NIV) *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

If we were to take an honest inventory of all the spiritual resources we as the North American Body of Christ are blessed with, and create a corresponding chart illustrating our spiritual growth—we may find ourselves blushing at our tiny spiritual growth curve in recent decades, given the embarrassment of riches we have amassed.

So, what gives? Why the disconnect between holy input and holy output? Well, Jesus teaches us that even the evil one knows Scripture and can emulate Christian *behaviour*. You know—say the right spiritual things in front of the right spiritual people—and you might just fool them all. Except God:

Matthew 13:24-30

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So, the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Indeed, spiritual impostors abounded in Biblical times, even as they slither into pews and pulpits today. Be not fooled!

2Timothy 3:1-9

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

In Matthew 4:1-11, the Holy Ghost leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. It isn't long before Satan picks up on our Lord's use of His Scriptural Sword to cut down each temptation, one by one. So what does the evil one do? He uses Scripture too—

in order to tempt Jesus to test God! Here the Father of Lies quotes from the Psalms, which he wisely took the time to memorize:

Psalm 91:11-12

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

One sure signature move of our adversary is to camouflage as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), as a Christian counterfeit.

*STUDY POINT: Find three passages in the New Testament that describe false believers and prophets. What are their common traits? How are we to respond to them?

As I mentioned in a previous teaching, James can be very direct. *Blunt!*

Do what it says (James 1:22). Do you find that command harsh? Is James really emphasizing works over grace here? Is he a Pharisee—all rules, regulations, and religion?

Well, beloved, just like we don't read a fiction novel and skip chapters between readings—and so disrespect the author's story line—we don't cut and paste Bible verses together and claim to have heard from God. Yes, James tells us straight up that *we are the problem*—but so does the whole council of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Holy Ghost via the Word of God consistently points us out as the real stinkers—refusing to *act* on what we *know*. Jesus said it first:

Luke 11:27-28

As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Jesus redirects the whole concern and focus of the crowd here in one of His most direct statements about obedience. In other words, He is aligned with James his half-brother in stating—*be a doer of the Word*.

As heart-wrenching as it is to face in our flesh, our love relationship with and our worship of our Lord and Saviour is measured only by our obedience to His Word.

John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

As a church blessed in so many ways—yet prone to wander—we His children are called to rekindle the relationship with our First Love:

Revelation 2:2-5

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and

do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Then, and only then, can we rejoice in our intimate connection with Jesus, bearing much fruit for the Father's glory (John 15:8).

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** What ways have you found helpful to refocus your mind and heart on Jesus? And how would you stay in that better spiritual place—that you might hear from Him more clearly?

James 1:23

(KJV) *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

(NIV) *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror*

James 1:24

(KJV) *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

(NIV) *and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*

We spend countless hours in the morning regarding ourselves in the bathroom mirror, in order to be presentable to the outside world. And what presentable constitutes varies wildly depending on the individual.

The Bible is also mirror. A spiritual mirror that reflects our character:

Hebrews 4:12-13

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

To stand in front of *this* mirror, we must approach with open hearts and the humility of Christ—through the Holy Spirit—so as to believe the Word, receive the Word, and obey the Word. Then we must linger in front of this mirror, allowing ourselves to be conformed to Jesus:

2Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Beloved, do not but take a glance at yourself in this mirror, and then dart out the door, believing everything is fine spiritually speaking. Oh, if you and I understood the full blessing and power of prayer and intimate fellowship with our Saviour in His Word.

Oh, to linger in front of this mirror.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

And this:

James 1:25

(KJV) But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

(NIV) 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.

So the blessing is in the *dwelling*.

The blessing is in the *delighting*.

The blessing is in the *doing*.

Amen.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland