***“JAMES” SERIES***

**#3: “Doers, Not Hearers Only”**

**SCRIPTURE: James 1:19-27**

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

***22But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.  23For 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.  24For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.  25But 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.***

***26If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.  27Religion 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.***

**INTRODUCTION:**

 **In some translations, it may see that James has jumped to a new subject, but he hasn’t; he has simply begun to point out how being *“firstfruits of* (God’s) *creatures”* plays out in our lives. In fact, that’s what the rest of the letter is about.**

 **In case you haven’t caught on yet, I’ll tell you: James is a very “common sense” guy, which will be apparent as we consider what he has to say.**

***THE FIRST BIT OF “COMMON SENSE” IS…***

 **…in verses 19 through 21, where he says, *“…let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.”***

 **This is what some call “moral logic”: If you’ve truly been born again, you’ll behave in such a way that reflects it; you’ll be more willing to listen than to speak; you’ll be slow to get angry because you know that your anger doesn’t show God’s righteousness; you’ll rid your life of the filthiness of sin and reckless wickedness and humbly be what God says you should be.**

 **How many times have you been frustrated by someone who just won’t listen – who continues to talk over you – who quickly begins to speak with anger? How many times have *you* frustrated someone else by the same type of behavior?**

 **Sometimes, in our anger, we get ugly. We say things we shouldn’t say and do things we shouldn’t do. We don’t behave as someone who follows Christ and lives according to God’s word. James says, “DON’T DO THAT!”**

***THE SECOND BIT OF “COMMON SENSE” IS…***

**…in verses 22 through 25, where he says, *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.  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.  For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.  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.”***

**Lots of people listen to the word of God as it’s preached and taught at various times. They attend Bible studies and listen to the teacher or preacher regularly. Their Christianity consists mostly of “going to church,” and they tend to think that that’s all there is to it. They’re so, so wrong! That’s as far as it goes. They rarely obey what they hear or read. They’re *hearers* but not *doers.***

**He says that such believers are like a person who looks at himself in a mirror, then steps away to go about his business, forgetting what he looked like.**

**He says that the mirror is *“the perfect law, the law of liberty.”* In other words, the Word of God is the mirror, reflecting who we really are, the person that God sees.**

**I get out of bed of a morning, go to the bathroom, look at myself in the mirror, and realize that I need some grooming. I need to shave, shower, comb my hair, brush my teeth, and get dressed. Then I’m ready for breakfast and the events of the day.**

**But what if I just got out of bed, looked in the mirror, and got dressed without doing what the mirror revealed that I needed to do? James says that we aren’t supposed to do it that way when it comes to the Word of God – that we’re supposed to follow up that look in the Word with some spiritual grooming.**

**Likewise, he says, we are to be *“doers”* of the word and not just *“hearers.”***

***HIS THIRD BIT OF “COMMON SENSE” IS IN…***

 **…verses 26 and 27, where he says, *“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.  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.”***

 ***The Simple English Bible* has it: *“If any of you thinks he serves God, but does not control what he says, then he fools his own heart. His ‘service’ to God is worth nothing. What God the Father accepts as pure unpolluted service are things like this: taking care of children who have no parents; helping widows in trouble; keeping yourself from the filth of the world.”***

 **There are believers who act so piously but reveal their actual *lack* of piety by running off at the mouth and thereby rendering their service to God utterly worthless. He says, “You want to show how devoted to God you are? Do things like helping orphans and widows and living a Christ-like life. Now. why does he mention these things? They’re probably what the Spirit brought to his mind. Helping widows and orphans are merely examples of the good things that a dedicated Christian wanting to live a Christ-like life should do.**

 **James Adamson, in his commentary on James, says that the “practical” James is saying that real Christianity consists of two things:**

1. **Word plus deed. It’s more than “lip service”; it’s going about “doing good.” It’s more than outward worship; it’s 24-7 inward devotion that causes us to not only talk the talk but walk the walk.**
2. **Keeping oneself from being stained by the sinfulness of the world. Jesus urged His disciples to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. You have to rub shoulders with some pretty worldly people from time to time. We have to *go to* the world if we’re going to *win* those of the world to Christ, but we are not to allow the world into our world, if you get my drift.**

**God knows very well that our tongues can get us into a lot of trouble. I have a feeling that He may regret creating us with such a powerful muscle as our tongue. James will have more to say about our tongues a little later.**

 **What does he mean by *“keep oneself unstained from the world”*? The NIV has it *“unspotted”* or *“from being polluted by the world.”* The *Simple English Bible* has it *“Keep yourself pure from the filth of the world.”* How do we do that? How do we live and earn a living in this world without being *“stained”* or *“spotted”* by it? We can’t live in a bubble! We can’t completely avoid non-Christians. We can’t always control our surroundings or pick and choose whom we work with. Besides, how do we take the gospel to others without mixing with non-Christians? We can’t. So, what do we do? When I used to go into the bushes and fence rows in my childhood days to pick blackberries, I would sometimes tie rags soaked in kerosene (we called it “coal oil”) around my ankles to ward off the ticks and chiggers. How do we “ward off” the “ticks and chiggers” of this world?**

 **I think the apostle Paul has the answer in Ephesians 6:10-20, where he says to *“…be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the armor of God”* and then describes each piece: *“the belt of truth…the breastplate of righteousness…the* (shoes of) *readiness given by the gospel of peace…the shield of faith…the helmet of salvation…and the sword of the Spirit…praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication…keep alert with all perseverance…”***

 **While immorality, hatred, and other worldly actions need to be avoided, the greatest and most damaging “pollution” we encounter in today’s world is *worldly wisdom* or *wrong thinking*. It leads to wrong responses, wrong actions, and wrong living. The apostle Paul urges us to not be *“conformed to this world”* and to renew our minds. He knew that we live the way we think; wrong thinking leads to wrong living.**

 **For example, a lot of believers have swallowed the world’s thinking about the Bible – that it’s a collection of myths that can’t be taken literally. So, their response is to question or reject its teachings, which leads to ungodly actions and ungodly lives.**

 **Another is that so many have been stained by the world’s standards of morality. We’re bombarded with it on tv, and we’re criticized and pressured by those of worldly standards. As a result, so many, especially of the younger generations, have rejected biblical teachings regarding morality, accepting as moral various forms of immorality, such as fornication, adultery, and homosexuality, leading to this horrific idea of transgenderism.**

**CONCLUSION:**

 **As we continue this “James” series, we’re going to encounter more of this very straightforward teaching, and I intend to present it in a very straightforward way.**