

James 1:19-27
Is Your Religion Worthless?

Today's message is radically simple and practical. There is only one question being considered, but the answer is one that only you can supply. Is your religion worthless? It's important to know that James is not concerned with the sincerity of the believer as much as the legitimacy of the believer's profession. One can be sincere but illegitimate (Mat. 7:21-23).

James is challenging the claims of those who possess only an outward religion. Every profession of faith in Jesus will be tested to demonstrate, not sincerity but legitimacy. James shows that a true follower of Christ will be revealed by how he...

1. ...Responds to trials (1:2-12)
2. ...Responds to temptation (1:13-18)
3. ...Responds to truth (1:19-27)

It is possible for a person to find great security in their religion, though they may have no legitimate claim to Christ thereby deceiving themselves. This is the purpose of James' warning. For our purposes today, we are looking primarily at what our response to **truth** says about our profession of faith. Is it legitimate or not? Is our religion worthless?

“quick to hear” (19) – hearing truth (Romans 10:17; Isaiah 55:11)

“slow to speak” – Proverbs 10:19; 17:28

“slow to anger” – not an “outburst of anger” but a seething anger that maybe only God sees. In the context, the anger is in response to God's truth. In contrast, a true believer is to respond in humility to how the Word exposes our sin (John 1:20).

“*does not produce the righteousness of God*” (20) – This is the Spirit's objective that the very righteousness of God might be produced in true believers (2 Cor. 5:21).

“receive the implanted Word” – A true follower of Jesus joyfully receives the Word which has been sown in their hearts and minds instead of rejecting, fighting, and forgetting the Word.

Parable of soils (Matthew 13:1-23)

“able to save your souls” (21)

1. We have been saved from the penalty of sin – past tense
2. We are being saved from the power of sin – present tense
3. We will be saved from the very presence of sin – future tense

James is speaking of the power of the Word to save the true believer daily from the power of sin. As we receive it, instead of pridefully fighting against it claims on our lives and we appropriate its truth day in and day we are set free to walk in the “newness of life” (Romans 6:4-6).

Receiving = obeying

The only true demonstration of properly responding to the truth of God’s Word is obedience. This is what James calls a “doer of the Word.”

Are your perspectives, values, decisions, and pursuits daily being shaped and formed by the principles and truths of Scripture? Be warned...no one asked, “are you a good person?” The question is are you increasingly conforming to the truth of God’s Word?

Many of us look “more intently” into mirrors each day than we do the Bible. We give closer attention to our outward appearance than the principles of Scripture. No one walks away from a mirror and forgets his own appearance, but often we give such a cursory glance at the Bible that we don’t even remember it’s message to us (Parable of soils, seed that falls on path).

Do we make room for the Word of God in our lives as though our very lives depended on it? Do you find yourself reaching for your Bible as often as you reach for your phone?

Christ’s does not intend to make us religious; his goal is to make us righteous. This is the very likeness of Christ. As the Bible finds a home in us (Colossians 3:16) and becomes the very lens through which we see all of life, we then become what James refers to as a “doer of the Word.”

This is what it means “*to receive the implanted Word.*” Today, are you receiving the implanted word? Are you giving careful, thoughtful, focused attention to the Word with the intention of obeying and altering your life accordingly?

If you are hearing only with your ears, with an unwillingness to repent and conform to the values of Scripture, then James would likely say that your religion is worthless!