

Abide – The Truth of God’s Word

2/25/24

James 1:19-24

Sunday AM

This week, Meg and I were on a call w/ one of Colin’s doctors – who made a passing comment that caught my attention. In speaking about some of the challenges we deal w/ in our culture, he said – ***the problem we’re facing as a country is that we’ve become far too transactional instead of relational in our dealings w/ people.*** That is – instead of truly caring about one another and desiring to have a genuine relationship, we only engage each other to get something from them. We’ve become a society of users – thus, people are not relationships to treasure, but commodities to be used and exchanged to get ahead in life.

I think he’s more right than wrong. I see it too often. Husbands/wives doing what they do for their spouses to get something in return. Parents/kids manipulating each other to satisfy their wants/needs. Bosses and employees using each other to achieve the bottom line.

Think about it... when was the last time you called someone or someone called you just to talk – to pour into you – w/ no strings attached and no request made?

As I’ve thought about this – I fear that we’ve also become transactional in our relationship w/ God – w/ most of us trying to use God to accomplish our wills instead of relating to God to know His will. Just listen to our prayers. Yet there’s **NOTHING** transactional when it comes to the abiding life. Thankfully, it’s just the opposite. ***God wants us to know Him and to be known by Him.*** He desires that we have a genuine, intimate, fulfilling relationship w/ Him so that we experience all of Him.

So, while it's possible to be a Christian and not abide; it's impossible to live the Christian life w/out abiding.

To **abide** is to live plugged into and empowered by H.S. by *remaining connected w/ or aligned under God.*

Meaning – the abiding life living in a close, continual relationship w/ Jesus that involves choosing to stay connected to Him by responding to the leading of the H.S. To help us, God has given us differing spiritual means like worship, prayer, stewardship, church, and the Bible to help us live intimately w/ Him

The WITH-God life. Dallas Willard

Truth – all of us are abiding in something/someone to meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs – and whatever it is can be identified by the fruit being born in our *ambitions, appetites, attitudes, and actions.*

After looking at the idea of waiting on the Lord and learning to worship God privately and publicly – today I want us to turn our attention to the necessity of engaging in the blessing of God’s holy, inspired Word.

There’s no shortage of Bible passages to consider as it pertains to the relevance/importance of God’s Word.

Psalms 119:11 says the Bible is a ***lamp*** unto our feet and a ***light*** unto our path.

Hebrews 4:12 calls it a ***surgeon’s scalpel*** that cuts to the chase to discern the thoughts/intents of our hearts.

2 Timothy 3:16 says it’s the inspired, God-breathed ***truth*** to build our lives on and to steer us back to God when we’ve stumbled or gone astray.

My favorite text about God’s Word is James 1:19-24:

My brothers, take note of this – everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, b/c human anger doesn't produce the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that's 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. Anyone who listens to the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, immediately goes away and forgets what he looks like. 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. James 1:19-24

I'm not sure if you caught it or not – but the key verse in this passage is vs. 22 – *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves – do what it says.*

That is – **LISTEN** to it and **LIVE** it out!

Before we jump into this passage, it's essential to note that everything James is about to say is regarding hearing God thru the Scriptures. It's not a principle for engaging people as some have mis-taught.

I **LISTEN** to the Word

quick to listen (*akouo*) *one who listens actively to obey.* It's the same word used in Ephesians 6 regarding children listening to and responding to their parents. Here the idea is that God expects us to prioritize listening intently and eagerly responding to His Word.

Juxtaposed to this encouragement is vs 22 where James says – *do not merely listen but do it.* In this verse, he's saying *we should never listen passively w/ no intent to put into motion.* It's the difference b/w attending a class to pass all the tests to earn a degree and auditing a class w/ no concern for getting credit.

This happens spiritually. Some people take advantage of hearing the Word but never put it into practice; they have an interest in spiritual things, a moral lifestyle, and church programs, but they have no desire to follow Jesus and obey His Word.

To actively **LISTEN** requires (3) actions on our part:

A To Hear Requires a Right **APPROACH**

I'm no pilot, but a few months ago, Camden and I flew w/ one of our church members to Bainbridge and back for a football game. I learned very quickly as we were landing that it required an accurate, proper approach. We had to get into the glide path, adjust the flaps, drop the landing gear, and consider the wind speed and direction if we were going to land safely.

I think the same is true when it comes to hearing God thru the Word – God's glide path is we must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

1 Quick to **LISTEN**

It means we're to carefully, continually, and skillfully put ourselves in a position to hear God speak thru His Word by seizing *every* opportunity to be exposed to God's Truth. This includes reading and studying your Bible and listening to God's Word being taught.

James's appeal is for believers to seize every opportunity to increase their exposure to Scripture by taking advantage of every privileged occasion to read and hear it faithfully preached/taught. This eager desire for such learning is one of the surest marks of a true child of God. When he is blessed, he turns to the Word to find passages of thanksgiving and praise. When troubled, he searches for words of comfort and strength. In times of confusion,

he searches for words of wisdom/guidance. When tempted, he searches for God's purity/righteousness for power to resist.

2 Slow to **SPEAK**

slow to speak – doesn't mean being apprehensive to speak or not speaking at all. Instead, it's a call to think about what's been said, pondering it thoroughly before responding. IOW – when God speaks to us thru His Word, we're to think it thru before reacting to it.

This is why David in **Psalm 1** instructed us to *ruminate* on God's Word (to chew on it) constantly so that we will be like a flourishing tree by streams of water. But it requires that we think before we speak about it.

3 Slow to become **ANGRY**

If this statement seems out of place – it's not. If the natural response of a God-ward life is to **receive** the Word w/ joy, then the natural response of a carnal or God-less life is to **reject** it w/ resentment.

anger (*orge*) a smoldering resentment. We resent that God wants something different than we want.

Truth – when God's Word is presented, it always confronts sin and conflicts w/ a person's ideas and opinions about life – and our flesh resents it.

B To Hear Requires Clear **ACCESS**

get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent

Moral filth/evil refers to our destructive sinful attitudes/actions that impede our ability to hear God clearly so that we can respond to His leading.

filth (*rhuparia*) refers to the building up of ear wax on your eardrums so that you can't hear. The idea is that sin clogs our spiritual ears to make it difficult to hear God speak thru His Word and thru the H.S.

Put your hands over your ears – what do you hear? Now turn to the person next to you and say something. What did you hear? I can tell you. Muffled sounds and the sound of your voice. This is what occurs spiritually when sin gets into our lives – God's voice is muffled and we tend to only hear our desires/opinions.

Remember – the key to the Christian life is hearing and obeying God's voice – and James tells us that to **HEAR** God you must **CLEAR** the sin

C To Hear Requires a Humble **ATTITUDE**

and humbly accept the word planted in you...

humility (*prautes*) means to receive God's instruction w/ a submissive and teachable spirit w/out resisting.

It's to be accepting of the Word instead of resistant to it when we don't like what it says or b/c it might be in conflict w/ our plans/ambitions. Rather than drawing a line in the sand and telling God what we won't do, we're to receive His Word w/ a willing spirit.

To receive God's Word w/ humility and a teachable spirit is a monumental aspect of genuine faith. If we're resistant it marks a **fooled** faith, but if we're eager to receive and apply it, then it marks a **proven** faith.

As vital as it is to hear the Word, it means nothing if we don't put it into action. The reason to **receive** it is to **respond** to it. The reason to **hear** it is to **heed** it.

II **LIVE** the Word

Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves – do what it says.

Do what it says (*poiete*) refers to a person who's totally immersed in the activity for which they've been called. It's more than **practicing** what you hear; it's **becoming** what you hear b/c you believe/value it.

Meaning – Christianity isn't a **noun** but a **verb**! It's to be lived out and not just talked about.

Can I assure you that on that day when we stand before God – Jesus isn't going to say, “Well **thought** or well **said** – but well **done** my good and faithful servant!”

What you believe is what you **act** on; everything else is just religious **talk**. *Vance Havner*

In John 8:31 – Jesus said it this way – *If you live by my teaching then you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.*

To clarify, James compares God's Word to a mirror.

*Anyone who listens to the Word but doesn't do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, **and continues to do this**, not forgetting what he's heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.*

What is the purpose of a mirror? It's to reflect the details of the outer person. The dilemma of a mirror is that **it never lies** as it accurately reflects every quality and flaw. So, if you have a pimple – you'll see it. If a hair is out of place – you'll see it too! DYK – God's Word does the same for the inner person. It accurately reveals a person's true nature, habits, and character – nothing is hidden – and it never lies!

Notice the word **looks** (*parakuptoo*) it means *to stoop down to scoop up*. It refers to a person who humbles themselves before God's Word by studying it, meditating on it, and absorbing it into their lives so that it becomes a part of them – like their breath.

James is encouraging us to allow God's Word to penetrate so deeply into our lives that it shapes our behavior/character. He's saying this is the reason God gave His Word – to speak directly to the issues of our lives to help us to know Him, walk w/ Him, and serve Him – and to bring us to an awareness of the things seeking to inhibit this relationship.

Of course – it raises a critical question. ***Just how much influence does God's Word have over your life?***

God's Word isn't to be a book to sit on our nightstand or coffee table to help us look/feel religious; it's God's Word spoken to us thru the ministry of the H.S. to guide us in the way of the Lord. It is truth to be heard – and truth to be lived.

Let me offer (4) ways to get God's Word into your life:

- **READ** the Word
- **HEAR** the Word
- **STUDY** the Word
- **MEMORIZE** the Word

A man entered into church late one Sunday asking, “Is the sermon done yet?” One man wisely replied, “The sermon has been preached, but it has yet to be done.” **God’s Word isn’t done when it’s preached, taught, or even read – but only when it’s been practiced!**