



Lesson 4 March 11, 2010

"Mirror, Mirror, What Do You See"

Introduction

After underscoring the need to remain vigilant and wary of the enemy's deception through which he attempts to draw us into enticement (v14), James will now concentrate on perhaps the even greater danger we face from self deception. In order to develop spiritual maturity, the foundational purpose of James' letter, each believer must realistically evaluate himself and acknowledge his flaws and needs. Only then can he begin to fulfill his responsibility to the word of God and demonstrate an active, living faith through practical good works.

1. In verses 19 – 21, James exhorts us to be quick to hear (presumably referring to hearing God's Word), slow to speak, and slow to anger (v19) since anger cannot produce God's righteousness (v20); in fact, it is the opposite of the patience we should seek to develop as outlined in verse three. We must humbly and meekly receive the implanted word (v21) as one of our primary responsibilities as a believer. This is the only means we have to cultivate our hearts as our Father continues His work of transforming us into Jesus' image – note: that transformation is a joint process of God and ourselves, for without God...we cannot and without us...God will not. How do these verses emphasize and reinforce the importance of James' several points?

Proverbs 4:23; 10:19; 19:11

Jeremiah 17:9-10

Romans 10:17; 12:2



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2. In verses 22 – 25, James addresses our responsibility to be a doer of the word (v22), not a hearer only (V23) who fails to fully examine himself (v24) and who therefore deceives himself (v24), for the faithful hearer and obedient doer of the word will be blessed (v25). How do these verses confirm James' thoughts?

Psalm 111:10

1 Corinthians 10:12

1 John 1:8

Jude 3b

3. In verses 26 – 27, James uses the words religious and religion, which in our current Christian culture of language connotes legalism and which may be one reason why many would suggest from a superficial reading of the epistle that James is a legalist. He is merely using the word to mean an outward show of worship or piety, and he makes the important point that one who is unable to control his tongue (a frequent theme in the letter) has an empty, useless piety (v27). He then contrasts that example with our responsibility to develop a pure piety which manifests itself both in ministering to those in need and in being unspotted by the defilements of this world (27). How do these verses correspond to James' ideas?

Proverbs 15:2, 4

Matthew 25: 31-40

John 17:14-16



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Personal Application

Many New Testament writers admonish us to diligent commitment and devotion in our daily walk with the Lord by earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 3), by carefully examining ourselves to verify that we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5), and by steadfastly continuing in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, and prayers (Acts 2:42). James emphasizes the same thought by stressing the importance of receiving the word of God in the power of the Spirit in order that we may realistically evaluate ourselves and then faithfully put that word into practice in our own lives.

The word of God is indeed a mirror into our own souls and hearts, which according to literal translation is incurably wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) and **which** is why we need a new heart given to us at our new rebirth in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). David cried "create in me a new heart, o God" (Psalm 51:10); however, we have a responsibility to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). James states that we can only do so through study and application of the word.

James interestingly describes the Word as the perfect law of liberty (1:25) in marked contrast to the burden of the Mosaic Law, for in obedience is freedom. "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Your precepts (Psalm 119:45). Jesus declared "if you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31 – 32), but He also warned that "whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34).

In an Old Testament prophecy of the coming Messiah we read "for He is a refiner's fire, and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:2–3). In those times, a refiner of gold would know that the dross had been burned away and that the molten metal was pure only when he saw his reflection in the gold. So, too, with us as we faithfully measure our lives by the standard of His word and become obedient doers of the word will we begin to reflect His image through the mirror of the word as He completes His work in us of restoration and transformation.