Sunday June 18th, 2017 **Know the Word, Do The Word** **James 1:19-27**

Over the last weeks we have covered handling doubts and the temptation to compare while in the midst of trials…

We concluded last week with the idea of anchoring ourselves in our identity in Christ – to secure ourselves when doubts come in and to fight against the comparisons, by defining ourselves not by others, but by what God speaks of us…

"Our Identity determines our Activity" – *based on our identity in Christ, our activity should back that up…*

3 main points: - Identity, Do the Word, Walk clean

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 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 observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world." James 1:19-27, NKJV.

Walking out the Christian life is like the pedals on a bike – *Know the Word, Do the Word*

- Without either pedal you cannot make that bike move effectively
- When we balance those pedals we can move freely.
- **On one hand, you can "know" all things –** and not have it operate in love…
    - *Double checking facts, knowing the meaning behind the Greek, understanding deep theological concepts*
- **On the other,** you can "do all the right things", but without knowledge end up deceived…
    - *Real practical, faithful, consistent…*
    - ***Neither one is good or bad by itself, but one without the other is not the effective thing Jesus intended it to be…***

<u>James learned from growing up with Jesus what it meant to **know the word and do the word-**</u>

These are guys who probably shared a bedroom together growing up. They would have sat at the dinner table, praying, talking, in addition to the rest of the family. They went to school together. So James watched his big brother Jesus grow to know the word of God and then do the word of God. He even heard Jesus say this very thing. We know that Jesus said it in **Luke 11:28. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who know the word of God and do it."** So, from Jesus' works, how he lived his life, and his words, the things that he taught, James learned what to do with this book.

Before we look at the list of what to do in the rest of James, lets revisit what we NEED to know:

God loves you, the Bible says, like a husband loves his wife, like a father loves his kids. God loves you. "*This establishes your identity, and out of your identity comes your activity."* ***Before he tells you what to do, he tells you who you are. It's very important to get that right.*** The result is that when we obey God, when we do what God tells us to do, we're not working for the love of God, *we're working from the love of God.*

- This is the difference between Christianity and other false religions. **It begins with the love of God.** God can't love you anymore, and no matter what you do, God won't love you any less. And this changes our obedience.
    - *Imagine if I had this conversation with my son... "I don't love you, but I might. "It all depends on how you perform. "I'm going to give you a list of things to do and not do. "If I find that you have obeyed them, then I might love you. But it's all predicated on your performance."*
- ***Instead, it's the Father saying, "You can work FROM my love.*** "Because I love you, I need you to listen to me. "I need you to trust that what I am telling you is for your good." So, he starts with, "Beloved, know this."

"Christianity is the Christian following in the footsteps of Christ." –

- Jesus didn't just hole up in some academic institution and just study all day.
    - *He didn't just go to the synagogue on the Sabbath.*
- He worked a job as a carpenter, he started a ministry, he fed people, he healed people, he taught people, he prayed for people, he served people, he rebuked people, he encouraged people, he went to the cross, he died. Jesus got stuff done. He did study, and he got stuff done.

When the Bible speaks of religion, it usually does so negatively, but here he's going to redeem it in a positive way. He's going to warn us about false religion, and he's going to encourage us toward true religion.

He says in the mirror illustration, that two things mark false religion: self-deception and forgetfulness.

- This is where, if you read alone, if you study alone and you're not in community, you're more vulnerable to self-deception because there's no one to disagree with you, there's no one to correct you, there's no one to examine you, there's no one to help investigate your heart and motive. Are you being humble or proud?

He's using this analogy. He says a religious view of Scripture is like someone who looks into a mirror and then walks away and forgets who they are, forgets what they saw.

Why is knowing the Word so important in addition to doing the Word?…

You open the Bible, you're like, "OK, it's like a mirror. "OK, I see myself in God's eyes. "I see my sin, my need for Jesus, my areas to learn, "and to change, and to grow, and what God is doing. "OK, I've got it. I understand it. Makes sense to me."
OK, put my Bible down, walked away. What did it say? I don't know. I forgot. I forgot what God said. I forgot what God showed me about myself.

- Just like the mirror shows us something about ourselves, God's word shows us something even deeper about ourselves, not just the expression on our face but the condition of our heart.
- That's false religion. – Just a surface view…

He says that true religion is helpful and it's holy.
He says that it's helpful to not cause harm through our words but instead bring help through our deeds. - And in that society, widows and orphans were the most vulnerable.

But what does it mean to be "unspotted from the wolrd?" – Not Abandoning the world, but not joining it…

In this sense, the world is not just all the people, and all the races, and all the nations that God loves, but it's ***the evil systems that are antithetical and in opposition to God.*** There's the kingdom of God and then there's the world, and they're in collision, they're in conflict. And Satan works through the world to deceive people, to tempt people, to destroy people, and to oppose the kingdom of God.

And as we travel through this polluted, defiled, disgusting, corrupted, cursed world, we're supposed to venture through it as God's people in a way that is completely unstained. Think of your life as a walk through a muddy, dirty, vile land, 50, 60, 70, 80 years. And in the beginning, imagine that you start with a clean set of clothes, but by the end, you were supposed to still be clean, unstained, no mark, no filth, no dirtiness of any sort or kind. That's the goal. How many of you find that discouraging? How many of you are like, "I'm not at the end and I'm already dirty"?

- There are a couple of ways to read this text. You can read it in a deceptive, religious way. "You can live a holy life. You can live a good life. "You can live a pure life. "You're not like those dirty sinners. You're better than they are." That's self-deception. That's pride, which is the worst sin of all.
- You can read it like an honest person and say, "It's too late. "I'm already dirty. "There are things I've done, "I wish I wouldn't have done them, "but I can't undo them. "There are things in my past that are not in my present, but the stain goes with me into the future."

How many of you have been out to dinner and you spill something on a white shirt, a white dress? You grab a napkin, put it in the water, and spread it. That didn't help. ***That's religion. Scrub really hard to make sure that you grind the stain in deep. All you were trying to do was clean yourself up, and all you did was made the stain bigger.***

Story from the Prophet Zechariah…

"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! *Is* this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."" **Zechariah 3:1-4, NKJV.**

The Angel of the Lord is the Messiah, as we have seen before; Joshua, the high priest, may here represent the whole Jewish people; and Satan, the grand accuser of the brethren.

- What Jesus doesn't say is, "They're good people. "They did their best. Nobody's perfect. They tried. We all make mistakes."
- What he says is, "Satan, it's all true, "and that's why I went to the cross, "and that's why I died in their place, "and that's why I paid their penalty, "and that's why I rose from the dead, "and that's why I took all of their condemnation "in exchange for my salvation. "I took all of their filth in exchange for my cleansing. "These are, they are, he is, she is my beloved. "Satan, I rebuke you. I silence you. ***"These are my beloved, and they don't need to be righteous on their own. They need my righteousness."***

I want you to know this. And in your life, everything you do should be motivated by knowing this. You can walk through this world unstained because in Christ you're already clean, and when you do sin, Jesus will gladly clean you. He will gladly give you his righteousness. He'll gladly walk with you. He'll never leave you. He'll never forsake you. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all of our unrighteousness.

But our walk in this world is what shows the world Christ; Our testimony that we leave with people speaks volumes about Christ…

God is looking for people of faith to work His plan through – Step out in faith that Jesus has made you clean, that the Love of God is the reason and strength behind why we serve and love others…

"Our Identity Determines our Activity"

Find the people you can love and serve…