**James 1:21-22**

**Quick to Hear: How Should We Receive the Word?**

**Therefore, ridding *yourselves* of all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.**

1. **“Ridding yourselves of all filthiness, and all that remains of wickedness”**

Good morning. Please open your Scripture to the Epistle of James. Today our Scripture of focus is James 1:21-22. At this point in the Epistle James is explaining further his earlier comment that God has given us everything we need to be able to withstand the trials of this life and we can do so with joy. As we begin our discussion today we first need to review quickly what James said in the preceding verses. When facing a trial, we need to be quick to hear what the Word of God teaches us. We also need to be slow to speak and slow to anger because when we too quickly resort to our own selfish opinions and biases we will base our reaction to the trials of life on our own selfish feelings rather than on the Word of God. It is now in verses 21-22 that James will further instruct his readers how they can do this.

In verse 21 we are commanded to remove the filthiness (sin) that remains in our lives. To rid ourselves of sin we must take on the new nature that God has blessed us with when He made us a new creation in Him. John MacArthur says this regarding verse 21 “Before God’s Word can produce His righteousness in us, we must renounce and put away the sin in our lives that stands between us and that righteousness.” Therefore, the first step to living a life in honor of God we must renounce the sin that is present in our lives. In other words, we need to make it clear that the former way of life we knew is no longer appealing to us nor do we want to have anything to do with it. Renouncing sin is crucial because if we say that we are being obedient to God, we cannot still live in our former manner embracing the sin that filled our lives. Example: If I say to my parents that I honor and respect them, yet continually disobey the rules they have established for me would they think that I respect them or not? They would not think so because my actions do not match my words. The old saying rings true in this situation “Actions speak louder than words.”

The next step to ridding sin to remove the filthiness that is present in our lives. Filthiness (ryparia) hroo-par-ee'-ah [To make filthy, defile or dishonor]: This is what makes us impure and defiles us in the eyes of God. We have inherited the sin nature from man’s rebellion; therefore all people are filthy in God’s eyes. There is nothing that you and I can do, using our own efforts, to make ourselves right with God. We must have a mediator who can heal that broken relationship. Jesus Christ is our promised redeemer who has done what you and I could never do. He has paid the price for our filthiness, so now we are pure in the sight of God.

James also addresses the need of ridding ourselves of wickedness (kakia). Someone who practices wickedness is someone who does evil and is not ashamed of that at all. What we see in the world today is the total depravity of mankind in that people do evil continually, have no understanding that what they are doing is wrong and they have no shame in it. Wickedness is seen when a person does what is in rebellion to God and has no concern for their behavior. James says that we need to step being wicked and acknowledge that we have done wrong. We must admit that we are sinners in need of salvation. That cannot happen if we continue to live in wickedness. Someone who practices wickedness is not willing to acknowledge any wrongdoing. If they are called out for their behavior they speak quickly to defend their behavior. Usually, the excuse given for that behavior is not very strong. Many times, you will hear that the devil made me do it, it just happened, or God allowed me to be tempted. None of these excuses are true, so rather than make up invalid excuses we need to remove that sin from our lives and then do the next thing which is to accept God’s Word.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says in 4:22-24 “**22**that, in reference to your former way of life, you are to rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, **23**and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24**and to put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” Paul reminds his readers that sin corrupts and eventually leads to death, but the new birth in Christ leads to being made new in the likeness of God. When Jesus Christ takes over your life He makes you a new creation and no longer are you being corrupted, but you are now being made new and alive in Him.

**“**But now you also, rid yourselves of all of them: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* obscene speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you stripped off the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new *self*, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it” (Colossians 3:8-10).

Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let’s rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let’s run with endurance the race that is set before us,”

Application #1: Let us remove from our lives anything that causes us to sin. Each of us knows the sins we struggle with the most. Do not put yourself in a situation that will cause you or others to stumble. We show respect for our brothers and sisters when we act in ways that honor God and do not cause them to stumble. If I have a brother struggling with alcohol I should not drink in his presence. If a brother has trouble with lust I should not expose him to a situation where he might be tempted. We can help each other rid ourselves of opportunities to sin. We will still have times when we give in to temptation, but if we strengthen each other in Scripture and prayer we will be better equipped to guard ourselves against the enemy. “Therefore, sin is not to reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the parts of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your body’s parts *as* instruments of righteousness for God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under the Law but under grace” (Romans 6:12-14). Because Jesus Christ has won the victory over sin we are already conquerors. We can live in obedience to God because of the grace He has given us through Christ, not out of obligation like the old covenant. When we surrender to Gods will He equips us with the ability to withstand temptation through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. **“in humility receive the word implanted”**

The second step to living this new life victoriously in Christ is to receive the word with humility. We are commanded to read God’s Word accepting what is says in humility. If someone has truly become regenerate and accepts the message of the gospel a fruit of that change will be that they will receive the Word of God with humility. The word being implanted is when we read the Word of God, take it to heart and work to study it in a way where we remember it. It is one thing to know what God’s Word is, but for it to make a change in us we must study it so that we may do what it says. When God’s Word is implanted in us this will lead to us having a new perspective in life.

In the Parable of the Sower Jesus explains what the implanting of God’s Word does for those who accept it in humility. Matthew 13:23 “But the one sown *with seed* on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty *times as much*.” Looking at this verse closely we see that when someone accepts God’s Word with humility they will not only bear fruit in their own lives, but with that fruit will produce more fruit for the kingdom. Living in obedience to God not only benefits the believer, but also those who come to faith through their witness. Our actions done in the name of Christ will result with the growing of God’s kingdom.

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon said regarding this verse “The first thing, then, is *receive*. That word ‘receive’ is a very instructive gospel word; it is the door through which God’s grace enters to us. We are not saved by working, but by receiving; not by what we give to God, but by what God gives to us, and we receive from him” (Spurgeon). Salvation is a gift from God and therefore man cannot earn His way to heaven based upon his own works. We must receive the word in humility, for then God may work His saving power through that faith.

Application #2: Take every opportunity to open God’s Word to study for yourself, gather with like-minded believers and pray that others will deepen their understanding of the gospel. If you do this God will answer your prayers and the Holy Spirit will give you the understanding that you request. Mathew 7:7-8 “**7**“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **8**For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

1. “prove yourselves doers of the Word”

This next phrase is the heart of the message that James is imparting in his epistle. To show that our faith in Christ is real we are challenged to live out that faith through our actions. We must keep in mind however that works are not what saves a person, they are saved through faith in God through Jesus Christ. The theologian Dave Guzik makes this comment “It was common in the ancient world for people to hear a teacher. If you followed the teacher and tried to *live* what he said, you were called a *disciple* of that teacher. We may say that Jesus is looking for disciples: doers, not mere hearers” (Dave Guzik). If we wish to be known as a disciple of Christ we must not only hear what Scripture teaches, but we must also do what it says.

Jesus instructed the importance of not only hearing the word, but doing what it says. In Matthew 7:24-27 He concludes the Sermon on the Mount by sharing the building of the house on rock and sand “**24**“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts on them, will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25**And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. **26**And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27**And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and its collapse was great.” So, if we have knowledge but are unwilling to put that knowledge into practice it will merit us nothing.

Just having an admiration of Jesus or liking what He taught is not going to make a difference in our lives. We must, in addition to hearing the word, do what it says. This is why in every message Sunday mornings we share applications so that you and I can take what we have learned and use it in our lives every day.

Finally, when we do what we learn and say we believe we will also bring glory to God because we will be acting on what we say we believe. When someone does in their life what they say they believe that results in credibility. You and I can either bring glory to God by doing what the Word says or we can bring harm to the kingdom if we refuse to live out what we say we believe. Others will see whether our faith is legit by the way we live. Every word we say and action we take is being evaluated every day by others. Let us live in a way that honors our Lord and Savior.

Application #3: Look for opportunities to show your faith in God. When we provide for the physical needs of others we do the work of the Lord. However, if we see others who do not know the Lord we need to share the message with them. Scatter the seed wherever you are knowing that the Holy Spirit will plant the seed where the Lord wills it. According to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, there are four ways to share your faith with others that I also feel is wonderful advice. The first step is to live a godly life- we need to live in a way that honors our Lord and Savior. We can show others we care for them by spending time with them, help to meet their needs and let them know that you are available to listen to their problems. The care and love our church showed to the Baker family yesterday is a marvelous example of faith in action. When someone knows how much you care they will then want to know more about what you know. People will care about what you know when they know that you care. The second step to sharing our faith with others is to pray for those whom you interact with. After you have had a conversation with someone or provided for a need they have pray for them that God would make Himself known to them and that the Holy Spirit will nourish the seed that was planted in their heart. The third step is reading Scripture regularly and gathering with the body of Christ in worship. In doing this you are feeding your own soul and preparing yourself for the work of ministry. We must be fed on a regular basis, or we will be left hungering. If you want to be used for the growth of God’s kingdom continue to feed your mind and your soul for the work so that God may use you when an opportunity arises. Finally, the fourth way to share the gospel is to always preach the gospel. The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans these words “for ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” You do not have to be an ordained Pastor to share the gospel. I urge you to share this with all because Christ’s return is getting closer every day. Let us not delay in making all know His saving grace and that through Christ they may be a new creation.

In conclusion, James has taught us in these verses that once we have heard the word we need to then take what we have heard and live it out in our actions. After we humbly receive the word this should lead to us sharing what we know with the world. Let us take every opportunity to share this knowledge with the world knowing that through that faithful obedience the Lord is bringing more into His kingdom. At this time, please join me in prayer as we lift up each other preparing to do the work of the kingdom. Q/A?