

Dirty mirror

ODCC 19/07/09 (x.pages)

Text: James 1:19-26

Introduction

1. My text is taken from vv 21 to 25. I love the letter of James – it does more to “stab” at my condition than any other book. James does not hold back but neither does he just stab, he also encourages.
 - a. The reason he does this is because he wants Christians to live as they ought to live.
 - b. They should know what God requires – and they can know this through His word and the word of God should direct their lives.
 - c. And rather than just knowing and talking the talk, they should walk the walk by living as God wants them to live.
2. No-one can say for sure exactly who this James is but most scholars from the earliest days believe it is James, the brother of Jesus who was and unbeliever until after Jesus rose from the dead.
 - a. Tradition says that from the moment of believing, James sought the Lord and spent so much time on his knees praying that he developed terrible arthritis in his knees so that they swelled up so badly that he was nicknamed “Camel Knees”.

Get rid of sin

1. Our text starts off like this: *“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent...”*
 - a. The old English says, Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness which can also be translated “excess of wickedness”.
 - b. Surprise! James is not talking to the non Christian, he is talking to Christians, and he says to us, “You, Christian, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent.”
 - c. Why does he say that to Christians? Surely he should be out on the streets and shouting that out to non Christians?
 - d. But no! He knows that sin is sin and that it’s part of our human nature, and that we do not automatically live perfect lives when Christ comes into our hearts.
2. So he admonishes: GET RID OF IT! The picture is that of a person who changes their clothes. They are dressed in the clothing of sin and they strip it off and they dress themselves in the clothes of righteousness.
 - a. The onus is on me to do something positive about my life. To find out from God’s word how I ought to live and then to live like that.
 - b. Christ did not come only to save me from my sin so that I could go to heaven when I die – He also died to save me from sin in this life because sin ruins lives.
 - c. He came to save me from • lust • lying • bitterness • hatred • jealousy • impatience • anger • coveting • laziness • slander • self-centredness • pessimism • bullying
3. All sin has a negative effect on our lives and on the lives of others.
 - a. And sin spoils our relationship with God because it hinders good communication with Him.
 - b. And sin spoils our testimony because we are supposed to be the salt of the earth, and the light than shines in the darkness, etc.

Humbly accept the word

1. Then our text says, *“humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”*
 - a. The word is to be rooted in our hearts. And who is responsible for planting it there?
 - b. Certainly our preachers and teachers have some responsibility but are not mainly responsible!
 - c. You and I are responsible for our own hearts and the word taking root there.
 - d. The Bible is not a book of men’s thoughts and ideas. It is the revealed word of God and if I know that then I had better be careful to read it and study it and know it (after all we allow so many other things input into our minds (e.g. television, films, magazines, books, education, etc.)).
2. We are to humbly accept the word. We cannot actually live the word without experiencing humility because if you live the word you live contrary to worldliness and the world does not like that.

- a. Jesus said, “*A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!*” (Mat 10:24-25).
 - b. If we allow the word to take root in our lives we will live different lives.
 - c. Our attitudes will be different • behaviour • talk • motives • reaction • values • work • play, etc.
 - d. You can be sure you’ll be considered “off the planet” and to be sure, you are!
3. What makes a good soldier? It’s *not* the **big man**; it’s *not* the **strong man**; it’s *not* the **courageous man**.
- a. A good soldier is a disciplined man. The above attributes will not stand you in good stead in warfare unless you have discipline.
 - b. When you join the army you come under discipline but unless you become disciplined inside, you will never really be a valuable and trustworthy member of the unit you’re serving.
 - c. God disciplines those He loves (Heb 12:1-13) but we must become disciplined from within.

Listen to act

1. I am dismayed at how I so often hear a message or read a Christian book and agree wholeheartedly with what I hear – in fact, I love to hear – BUT it does not go beyond hearing.
 - a. Hearing has no value unless followed by doing.
 - b. James tells me that I am like a man who looks at his face in the mirror and then goes away and *immediately* forgets what he looks like.
 - c. You see, it’s personal. The word is not for somebody else – it’s for ME.
2. The word reveals the real me. Just as a mirror shows me what I look like physically, the word shows me what my heart looks like.
 - a. If I look in the mirror and there’s a dirty mark on my face, I wash it. If my hair is windblown, I comb it, etc.
 - b. As we look into the word and see our hearts, as we notice something out of place, we adjust accordingly.
 - c. When I look into the mirror I see myself ageing. That may be a negative for some of us but if we change the word “ageing” to maturing, that’s better. Because I can also judge if I am maturing as I study the word.
3. James calls the word *the perfect law that gives freedom*. It is perfect because it’s source is perfect. God is the source of His word. Like pure and fresh water bubbling from a pure spring.
 - a. The person who lives and adjusts their lives by the word will be blessed.
 - b. I said at the beginning that God wants to save us from the sin that so easily hinders us. It is through the washing of the word that He does this (Eph 5:26).
 - c. And as God does this in our lives we find more joy, why? because we are no longer like little children who need constant discipline and training. We have become disciplined and we are beginning to think like God with respect to this world, and so there is a kinship which has always been there but matures into something wonderful.
 - d. Paul speaks about this in 1 Cor (2:10-16) and says, “*For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ!*”