

# Marks of a Doer of the Word

Sermon 6 in the James Series

## James 1:26-27; 2:1-7

We saw in James 1:22 that he exhorts us to be “doers of the Word and not hearers only.” This does not mean we neglect HEARING. We are to esteem the Word of God as more necessary than our daily food. But what he does mean is – it does no good to hear it – and then let it go in one ear and out the other.

-- The Word needs to be taken in and digested.

-- Then, by the Spirit the Word gives life to our spiritual souls – like oxygen, food and drink give energy and life to our bodies.

The rest of the epistle of James is taken up with practical ways TO DO the WORD.

## I. Observations on the word “Religion and Religious”.

Just like in English

**The Word “Religion” can be used in a Good Way and it can also be used in a Bad Way.**

It can mean the true faith and system of belief found in the Scriptures.  
It can also mean paganism, false beliefs and any kind of ritual practice.

Talking about THE CHRISTIAN religion  
There is TRUE religion.  
There is SELF-DECEIVED religion.

If anyone thinks he is religious.

Yet fails in this – he is SELF-DECEIVED.

It doesn't matter what he THINKS – what matters is WHAT IS.

Verses 26-27 mark the transition from chapter 1 to the rest of the book.

## II. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God. 1:26-27

We must not think these are the ONLY marks of true religion.

James is not saying that the whole sum of the Christian faith is found in these three things.

These are not the **ONLY THINGS** that matter – we would be mistaken to interpret it that way.

Afterall – what did Christ say is the **GREATEST COMMANDMENT**?  
To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

**AND WITHOUT FAITH** – it is **IMPOSSIBLE** to please God  
-- Faith is a prerequisite for pleasing God

-- He that cometh to God must believe that **HE IS** and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

-- And, of course, Christ Jesus the Lord is the **AUTHOR** and **FINISHER** of our faith.

And **WITH** the **FAITH** – given and grown by God there will be certain actions.

James names 3 of those actions here.

They are not the **ONLY** actions – but they are ones that James will center on and elaborate upon as he goes through his epistle.

### **A. A Bridled Tongue**

James is the only NT writer who uses the expression of “bridling our tongue” – and he only uses it twice but it is such a powerful and vivid illustration – that it has become well known to Christian and non-christian alike.

#### **3:1-3**

Here are these large magnificent animals  
– much stronger than we are  
– yet we are able to control them with the reigns, bit and bridle.

The tongue – it can be a wonderful member.  
It can also be wild, untamed and out of control.

How many times have you SAID SOMETHING and then instantly regretted that you said it?

How many times have you WISHED you could pluck those words right out of the air, and put them back in your mouth.

You can't.

The control we have on the tongue, is not to say these things in the first place!

Unrestrained speech

Lying swearing, foul-joking, anger, boasting – all these are examples of unrestrained speech.

-- Speaking when we should be hearing,  
-- speaking things that do not need not to be said – further examples.

There is ONE who NEVER sinned with His tongue.  
The Lord Jesus Christ had perfect control of His tongue.  
-- Never a man spake like this man.  
-- Never a man remained properly silent like this man.

James goes on to say, in chapter 3, where we will deal in detail with speech – that IF YOU COULD PERFECTLY CONTROL YOUR TONGUE, you could perfectly control yourself in every way.

-- As believers, we sin with our tongue.  
--But as believers, we STRIVE to bring our tongue under subjection to God's Word.

Have you ever heard someone you respect – say something totally out of character for them?

It surprises you.  
It may even shock you.

On one hand, that speaks well of them, for it obviously is not their normal method of speech – while we hear wrong and vile things around us all the time.

On the other hand, it shows how much we are in need of the grace of God – and how we still battle against sin – and will battle until the day we are made perfect – forever.

**CURSE WORDS** – are meant to shock.

But, they are so common-place in our culture – hey often do not shock us anymore.

We hear them every day in practically every venue.

A bridled tongue – a controlled tongue – it is a sign of true religion and a loose tongue is a sign of religious self-deception.

As we say in our culture -- **TALK IS CHEAP**, but never forget – **TALK ALSO REVEALS** what is in the heart.

## **B. Widows and Orphans 1:27**

We'll conclude our message today with general exhortations concerning “the poor” – those who are usually despised by the world. And the early Christian church was made up primarily of what we would call “poor” and one reason is because the vast number of people who lived at that time **WERE** poor.

God is the God of the helpless.

Widows and orphans are the most helpless of all.

It is important to realize just how helpless widows and orphans were in the culture of James day.

It is **STILL** that way today – in so many places on this earth. Most widows had no respectable way to make a living.

They were at the mercy of their family – and if their family had no concern for them – they were in real danger of starvation.

**1 Timothy 5:3-8**

That was society's SAFETY NET in Paul's day.  
It still is the safest and best safety net.  
The responsibility is FIRST to the family.

It was relatively unheard of that SOCIETY would care for these helpless ones – except in the OT nation of Israel.

When the family failed – and society had no means to help – it naturally became the responsibility of the church – where we are ALL brothers and sisters to love each other and help each other.

James was very much aware of this.  
After all it was HIS CHURCH that had the first NT widow's minister in Acts 6.

In some ways it is surprising that the church would have to minister to so many widows in such a short period of time.

But, in other ways, it was not surprising.

There would always be those sad cases of women who were left alone – with no family – or with family unwilling to help them.

But many of these ladies had come to the faith of Jesus Christ. We can assume they were cut off by their families because of their faith.

They were counted as DEAD – and with no family willing to help -- now it was their new family -- the church who would help them on a daily basis.

We can see why the issue of widows and orphans would have been so near to the heart of Pastor James.

Interestingly, Paul does not tell the church to support EVERY widow. He exhorts the young widows TO MARRY, which was a practical solution to a very real problem – because it was not unusual in an age of war and sickness for there to be MANY young widows.

God’s special promise is to be a father to the fatherless and a help to widows.

## OT EXAMPLES OF WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

We see the command to care for the helpless. **Turn** to Deut. 14

**Isaiah 1:16-17** -- “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.  
Cease to do evil,  
<sup>17</sup> Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Rebuke the oppressor,<sup>[a]</sup>  
Defend the fatherless,  
Plead for the widow.

We see God’s blessing for Israel as they care for the helpless.

**Deut. 14:28-29** -- <sup>8</sup> “At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates.

<sup>29</sup> And **the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance** with you, and **the stranger** and **the fatherless** and **the widow** who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

This is not the traditional 10% tithe that we all know about. We could consider this an additional TAX for those who had no land – and the Lord promises a blessing on them if they will obey.

Another provision of what we could call “welfare” or better yet “workfare” in **Deut. 24:17-22.**

The OT account of RUTH is a wonderful story of TWO WIDOW ladies who were providentially provided for by the Lord out of great

distress – Naomi and Ruth – and Ruth, the Moabitess even became a direct ancestor of **King David and the Lord Jesus Christ (and also James!)**

We'll say more on this subject in a moment – but let's move ahead.

### **C. Keep Oneself Unspotted from the World.**

Sin is a defiling thing.

Sin creeps in – but stay hidden in a corner – it spreads.

It spreads like cancer – and I don't say that to minimize or trivialize cancer – in reality, sin is much more dangerous and destructive than cancer!

There are many meanings for “world” in the Scriptures.  
Here – it is obviously used in the negative sense.

This is not James telling us that everything in the world is bad.  
This is not James telling us that everything in culture is bad.

But James IS warning us – that every culture has its own sinful tendencies.

We don't have to think long and hard to know what sinful and wicked influences pervade the American culture.

Keep yourself from it!  
Don't engage in it!

How do you separate from it?  
Not by becoming a monk.  
Not by refusing to associate with the lost.  
Not by going OUT of the world.

We separate from it – by refusing to agree WITH it in our heart.  
We don't soak it in.  
We don't bask in the evil.

We don't have to be the ones CONSTANTLY REBUKING culture and letting everyone know how bad they are.

We do need to be the ones **CONSTANTLY REMINDING OURSELVES** of those things that are wrong – and refusing to be partakers in them.

If you begin to partake in what is wrong, you will soon **AGREE** with what is wrong.

### **III. Esteeming the Rich and Despising the Poor 2:1-7**

Here is James illustration.

We don't know if he is referencing something that **REALLY** happened, or giving us a hypothetical, or talking in general about the natural way men look at things (which is more likely).

We also don't know if he is talking about an assembly for worship (that seems to be the most likely).

**OR** if he is referencing something that is a re-occurring theme in the OT – about rendering **JUST JUDGMENT** – not perverting justice -- in other words, in a court-type situation – favoring the rich over the poor.

However, it certainly **DOES** apply to both – and the court idea has behind it the fact that the rich often use the courts to oppress the poor – and as we said, the majority of Christians – especially the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and part of the dispersion **WERE** poor.

The rich and poor have this in common – **BOTH** are made in the image of God and both are answerable directly **TO** God.

We are also told by Christ, “The poor you have with you always.”

We will **NEVER** entirely wipe out poverty.

Before Christ returns, there will never be a time of pure equality of prosperity on this earth.

But a man's worth and a man's life is not measured by his bank account.

Here is a challenge for US as a congregation.

How do **YOU** treat visitors?

Each should be treated with respect and dignity.  
It's easier to do that with the nice young family – but everyone deserves that kind of treatment that walks through those doors. You never know the difference YOU may make in someone else's life.

OR – the harm you may cause by ignoring someone, when nothing more than a kind word could have really been helpful.

Not only that – but what about our regular attendees that don't exactly fit what society thinks of as a successful person or a successful family?

Those that have problems.  
Those that face various issues.  
Those that simply don't have it “all together”.

You know, there are a lot of people who LOOK LIKE they have it all together, and don't – and there are a lot of simple folk – who love the Lord and are LOVED BY the Lord – they are HIS CHILDREN – and dare we look down on ANY child of the King?

I'm not talking specifics here – any more than James it.  
James is giving us a hypothetical – and so am I.

Don't be an evil Judge with evil thoughts.  
Examine your own heart – and go outside yourself – to the glory of God – to the honor of – and 2:1 can be translated as a title -- **The Glorious Lord Jesus Christ.**

What matters is – DO YOU KNOW HIM.  
What matters is – DO YOU DO THE WORD.

What matters is – have you put all your hope and trust in Him, and have you followed His example, by rebuking the all too common sin of partiality.