

## James 1:17-27

### "Just Do It"

The 73<sup>rd</sup> psalm begins, *"Truly God is good..."* Ps 73:1 It's a fundamental, foundational fact that *you* need, that *I* need, that *we* need to have firmly fixed in our hearts. We need to be resolved *on* this, securely anchored *to* this truth. "God is good".

If you're not, than you'll be open to *consideration* when *temptation* comes your way; that was the topic at hand as our time came to a close last week. We were considering the *source* of temptation, the *steps* in temptation & the *solution* to temptation. The *source* of temptation is found in you, it's found in me. We're tempted when we're drawn away by *our own* desires & enticed. It goes from desire, to deception, to disobedience... to death. When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; & sin when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

But if you're fully persuaded in your heart that God is good, you won't be lured into thinking that you need anything else, or anyone else to meet your needs (or perhaps I should say, 'fulfill your desires'). You won't be looking for the "short-cut" (as we spoke last week) to satisfaction. You see; it's once we start doubting the goodness of God that we're open to & attracted *by* the enemy's offers. It's when we cease looking around & remembering God's goodness that the enemy can bait us. That's why Moses warned the children of Israel of there in Deut. (6:10-15). He said, "God is going to bring you into a land full of beautiful cities which you didn't build, wells that you didn't dig, vineyards full of olive trees which you didn't plant... & when you have eaten & are full beware, lest you forget the Lord Who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

The idea being that when you forget that all these great things in your life are the result of God's goodness you'll be open to other options. We have to remember God's goodness. It will serve as a barrier against yielding to temptation. In Vs 17 James reminds us...

### Vs 17-18

As we follow the flow, what we're discovering here is that temptations will seek to lure us away from God's ways, God's word, God's will, His plan & His purpose for our lives. God will never seek to entice you, nor solicit you to sin. Because God is good, & because God is good, only good things issue forth from Him.

So James is telling us that temptation doesn't enter our lives through the Lord. But rather God is the source of goodness, gives things to us that are *good for* us, not *destructive to* us. Now we should point out that what we consider good & what God considers good are sometimes worlds apart.

Because God reasons from the eternal perspective, we're often driven by creature comforts. We want to be rich, perhaps be able to rest in comfort; but making lots of money might be the single most destructive thing that could ever happen to you. Instead God may give you an ailment, an affliction; though it brings discomfort to you physically, it keeps you crying out to Him & drawing near to Him spiritually.

I think of Paul the apostle. Leave the book of James & flip back to **2 Cor 12** (7-10). Paul said that a thorn in the flesh was "given" to him. Who among us are in line, looking for a gift like that? Yet, what seemed to be an affliction initially he came to see has a huge blessing ultimately because it served as a means to facilitate the power of Christ in & upon his life. It was God's *gift* to him; think about that.

God help us to lay hold of the heavenly perspective. Now that's not to say that only afflictions are God's gifts & if it brings comfort in some fashion its not from God. I'm simply seeking to broaden our perspective concerning God's goodness... The givings of God are good, they are good for us & they glorify Him.

They are also constant, God is constantly giving to you & me; the phrase "comes down" is a present participle; "and keeps on coming down" from the Father of lights. You may not see it or sense it, but God's goodness toward you is constant. Your next breath is a gift from God, the beat of your heart, these are God's gifts to you. The bible (Dan 5) teaches that God holds our breath in His hand, if you get to breathe, you're receiving of God's goodness. If you know J.C. you're a recipient of God's "Perfect Gift" that's come down from above. For God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son... God is good & His givings are good to you & me; He won't tempt you to evil, He won't turn you toward darkness. He is the Father of lights. As John told us, "***This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.***"<sup>1</sup>

Here's the message, through Satan, through sin, through self indulgence is deception, disobedience, darkness & death. But through the Lord is understanding, is light, is life, is goodness... & it will never be any other way. There is no variation or shadow of turning in our God. Malachi 3:6, "***For I am the Lord, I do not change;***" "***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.***"<sup>2</sup> God doesn't have good days & bad days, we're all over the scale, up & down, back & forth, on & off. God isn't like that. We were speaking a little bit last week about things God's can't do.

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Jn 1:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Heb 13:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He can't love you more, He can't learn, He can't tempt you to evil; here we learn that neither can He change. He can't change for the worse because then He is no longer holy, He can't change for the better because He is already perfect. So if there's a "shadow" between God, & us He didn't cause it, He didn't move, He didn't change. We're the variable, He's constant, & He's constantly good.

Btw I should also state that the fact that He doesn't change means there's no exceptions to His word for our lives. There's no special deal that you have w/God that no one else does, there's no sin in your life that's an exception to the rule, God doesn't change for any man, He remains the same (& as such so do His standards).

But remember God's goodness in your war against temptation. Remember when Nathan came to David after he'd taken Bathsheba? & God said to David, "I anointed you king over Israel, I delivered you from the hand of Saul, I gave you your masters house & his wives into your bosom, I gave you Israel & Judah; & if that had been too little, I would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?" (2 Sam 12:7-9) **The idea being, "David, I've been so good to you, why then would you turn from Me?" Remember God's goodness when temptation comes your way. Don't seek short cuts to satisfaction, wait on the Lord; if it's good for you He will provide it. David could've killed Saul twice, but he resisted the temptation & God did the work in His time, His way.**

**Vs 18**

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth". Speaking of the goodness of God...☺ As it pertains to the salvation that God has so graciously provided to you & me, He acted deliberately; intentionally to make us His own. John Ch 1 ***"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."***<sup>3</sup>

If you've been born again it's because God has called you into His kingdom. We don't choose God, God chooses us (& He does so on the basis of foreknowledge). He knows who will run the course, who will stay true to Him till the end, so He calls them, He chooses them. Even as we don't choose to be born physically, we really don't choose to be born spiritually. We're born again not of blood (because of human descent) nor of the will of the flesh (because of our own efforts) nor of the will of man, but by the will of God.

The A-Z is God's work, all you're left to do is believe Him for it.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 (Jn 1:12-13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

When you place your faith in J.C. God does the miracle, we don't generate our spiritual birth anymore than we generate our human birth. That's what Jesus was seeking to explain to Nicodemus. He said, "You've got to be born again if you're going to enter the kingdom of God." Nick said, "I've got to enter my mother's womb a 2<sup>nd</sup> time?" Jesus said, "No, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." & That which is born of the Spirit is the result of the work of the Spirit in our lives, not our own doing. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God (the word of truth) to facilitate the Life of God in you.

Btw we might point out that by requiring a new birth (as it pertains to salvation) God is declaring that He cannot accept the old birth. Just being born won't get you to heaven, you've got to be *born again* by the Spirit of God. **We see God illustrate this point throughout the scriptures, He accepted Abel, not Cain, Isaac not Ishmael, Jacob not Esau. He rejects our 1<sup>st</sup> birth as sufficient, & declares we need a 2<sup>nd</sup> birth, being born (as it were) by the Spirit.**

#### Vs 19-20

Now this is a practical truth that will help you in virtually every arena of life. 2 ears, 1 mouth, listen twice as much as you speak...☺ ***"Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive."***<sup>4</sup> Believe me it will help you in your marriage, in your employment, how many times we get in trouble because we are quick to speak, quick to wrath (anger) & slow to listen?

James says, "Learn to be a good listener." Now specifically, contextually he's referencing the teaching of the word of God. When the word of God is being taught, or shared w/you, be careful to listen attentively, don't be quick to interrupt or feel like you've got to debate your point, don't be argumentative over God's word. Getting mad & arguing your point won't suddenly win someone to Christ or persuade someone to your perspective. Jesus was patient w/people, would let them speak, find the teachable moment & then share the truth. Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...

#### Vs 21

Again let's keep the context. James is talking about temptation, sin, deception & the destruction & death that it brings as opposed to God's goodness, His light, His life, His word of truth. The idea being, "Hey, why walk *in* or entertain anything that would hinder our walk & relationship w/God Who has only good for us?"

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 (Pr 17:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let's not go there w/temptation, let's lay aside our ugly temper (our wrath) & every other sinful or impure inclination of our lives. "Lay aside all filthiness & overflow of wickedness" "& receive w/meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." You see, ultimately the key in both responding to trials & resisting temptation will be found in our relationship to the Word of God. Receiving it, responding affirmatively to it & our resignation to it (that is accepting it rather than arguing w/it) will serve as key tools in your arsenal in leading a godly life, responding rightly to trial, resisting temptation... We've got to accept the Word, act on it & abide by it.

Repent of sin, receive God's word (that's the essence of Vs 21). To the negative lay aside the filthiness & overflow of wickedness, to the positive receive w/meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul. What did Peter say? "...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,"<sup>5</sup>

Now what's our responsibility as it pertains to receiving God's Word? We're to approach God's word w/meekness. That is we're to have a soft, gentle, teachable spirit which recognizes the authority of God's word & readily submits to it.

Jesus spoke about the soil of our hearts, it's either hard ground, riddled w/the thorns of the cares of this world & desire for riches & other things, not prepared to go the distance in tough times or it's ready to receive (that is welcome) God's word, implanted deep in your heart that it might send down its root & bring forth it's fruit in your life.

But it's up to you to prepare your heart, to bust up the fallow ground, ready yourself to receive God's word. A sinful life, having anger, showing wrath, enjoying filthiness, abounding in wickedness; these are things that will hinder the work of God's word in your life. What's another possible hindrance? Hearing it, but not doing it, notice.

#### Vs 22-25

You see to truly "receive" God's word is to appropriately "respond" to God's word. If I've *received* it, it will be evident by the fact that I'm *doing* it, I'm actively *obeying* it.

It's an epidemic in the Christian culture today; too many people have this mistaken notion that hearing a good bible study, or memorizing scripture is the means of spiritual growth & God's blessing. "Man that was a great study... I've obtained all this information, I'm really growing." No, you're not.

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Pe 1:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

If the information never translates to application than you're only deceiving yourself. Now, you're not deceiving anyone else. We've all met the guy, the gal that claims to be the believer, knows a lot about the bible, but their life is not reflective of that at all. Remember what Paul said? He said, *"...for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;"*<sup>6</sup>

A lot of Christians mark their bibles but never allow their bibles to truly mark them. Meaning that it never truly brings change, or growth in their lives. This is that which Paul the apostle was talking about when he said to the Corinthians, *"You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."*<sup>7</sup> He was saying that the work of God's word was evident in their lives, the question that confronts me is, "Is that same statement true of me?" Is it true of you? Is it evident to others (who may never read their bible but they'll study your life from cover to cover) that God's Word is at work in your life.

You see, it comes down to our approach to the word of God doesn't it? How do you approach it, why do you approach it? James uses the illustration of a mirror. When you approach a mirror there's generally a purpose. *You wake up in the morning, you stumble to the bathroom, trying to get around & you look in the mirror, why? To admire your beauty? (Well there is that 😊) But more specifically its so that we can fix something. We need to brush our teeth, or fix our hair, maybe wash our face or apply some make up; whatever.* We want to make sure that whatever may be out of place is put in it's appropriate place before we leave the house. If I looked in the mirror, saw junk in my teeth, stuff on my face, hair all tweaked, then left the house having done nothing about any of it but forgot all about it & thought I was leaving the house in tip top shape ready to take on the world, I'd be kidding myself.

James says that's what it's like when we approach God's word. It's like a mirror reflecting back to us areas of our life that are out of order, it deals w/our foul mouth, or our bad attitude, our self justification, perhaps a poor prayer life or whatever. But when we see those things reflected back to us & then we close the book & go on about life giving no attention to it, not repenting of it or placing things in the proper order yet we think we're Mr. or Mrs. Spiritual, we're only kidding ourselves. We've deceived our self.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ro 2:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (2 Co 3:2-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This word “deceiving” speaks of “cheating or deceiving by false reasoning”, thinking you’ve played your part by hearing a study, or reading the Word; it’s when it goes from information to application that it begins to get real & bring growth in your life. You look in a mirror because you need to *do* something; we read God’s word to find the principles therein & place them into action in our lives.

If you look in a mirror, receive information about yourself & then do nothing about it, why look in the mirror? Even so if we read or hear God’s word, but then don’t place it into practice, why read it or hear it?

So let’s not *glance at* God’s word, let’s *gaze into* God’s Word (we’re talking penetrating examination). It’s the one who looks into the “perfect law of liberty”, Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”<sup>8</sup> It’s the one who studies God’s Word *and continues in it* (that is he/she is a *doer of it*) that will be blessed.

It’s the identical point that Jesus closed His sermon on the Mt with, write it down, look it up later Matt 7:24-27.

Vs 26-27

Now the word “religious” is a word that’s never really used in a positive sense in the NT. Here James uses it of someone who may be “religious” but not really right w/God as evidenced by how they speak. Jesus told us that what’s in the heart will surface through the mouth. You might go through all these motions, but if you don’t even bridle your tongue than you’re not right w/God regardless of what kind of performance you put on. Again, you deceive your own heart.

James says, “You wanna know kind of things God is into? Conduct & character.” Both of which (I might add) will result from being a doer of the word. James mentions orphans & widows, because they were often times the downcast of that culture, they had no one & no means to take care of themselves. In reality, for you & me it breaks down to helping people in need & not polluting ourselves by the things of this world.

If you help someone who has a need, God says that’s right on. Beyond that keep yourself pure, don’t pollute yourself through the things of this world, the things of the flesh. Ok, we’ve heard the Word of God, now what? Just do it!

<sup>8</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 (Jn 8:31-32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Prayer Points:**

God, You've exhorted us today to be doers of Your word. We want to be obedient to You, actively obedient. Lord we've looked into Your word, may we not be the forgetful hearer thinking we've done our duty while in reality doing nothing.

God we thank You for Your goodness, we thank You for calling us Your own & we give You praise.

Of His own will He brought us forth. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. If you've not given your heart to Christ, but something is resonating in you today, calling you out & saying, "Hey, it's time; it's time to turn from your sin & trust in Jesus who's loved you, shed His blood for you & will forgive you of all your sin, just turn to Him." It's yours to believe in the Lord J.C. & God will give you new life, born again as by the Spirit of God, surrender to the Lord today.