

## **The right way to experience salvation**

### **Jas. 1:18-27**

Intro: Today, a lot of preachers are talking about religion. The word “religion” is getting bad press, because it is placed unbiblically in contrast to relationship with God. What is important, we are told, is not religion, but a relationship with God.

I’d be the first to agree that you can practice religion without a relationship with God. And often many do that and it is worthy of condemnation. But, there is no way you can have relationship with God without practicing religion—religion that is pure and undefiled! In fact, this religion is the result of the process of salvation itself.

So, the question is, “How can we be assured that our religion is right?” For an answer, let’s turn again to James chapter one.

The teaching of James one centers around two spiritual births. The first of these is the birth of sin through temptation; the second, the birth of a Christian through salvation. In our last lesson on James we looked at the right way to deal with temptation; now let’s look at the second half of James one where we learn the right way to experience salvation. When that happens, we will practice a religion that is pure and undefiled.

### **The birth of a child of God, v. 18 (Experiencing the relationship)**

#### **In the exercise of His will**

James is saying, God is not the source of our sins; but He is the source of our salvation. He took the initiative to save us.

#### **He brought us forth**

The word is something like “begat”. I.e. he became our father.

#### **By the word of truth**

The agency of the new birth is the word of God. God uses the gospel as his means of transforming us from sinners to saints. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:23 I cannot have a relationship with God without acceptance of the word of God which establishes the relationship!

This is important because our success in being God’s children is vitally connected to our relationship with His word!!!

#### **That we might become the first-fruits of his creatures**

This is the result of the process. Just as by the word God brought into existence the first creation, now by the word He brings into existence a “new creation”.

If James is thinking only of the Jewish Christians he is writing to, then we might conclude that they are the “first fruits” of God’s creation with the implication that the Gentile Christians would follow later. Also, the term “first fruits” sometimes means “the best”, the result of the strength of the plant. So, in this sense, as we let God work in our lives we demonstrate a quality of life that is superior. I say that, not to make us feel self-righteous; but to encourage us to realize that in

God's purpose we were intended to be the best! We ought to be challenged by that!

And now we are ready to consider:

### **The right way to let salvation work in us**

#### **We need to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, v. 19-20.**

Through the years, preachers have often quoted this verse as if it were a general commandment about how to treat others. There are many such verses in the Bible; but this does not appear to be one of them. In the context, this is talking about in our relationship to God and the word of truth. It is not so much a description of our moral character in general, but our response to God efforts to save us! James says we need to be....

**Quick to hear—Are our ears really focused on the word? Are we ready to hear? To say like Samuel, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening?”**

**Slow to speak—Everybody has an opinion; but the disciple is concerned only with this. What does the Lord say?**

**Remember this verse, “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silent before him.” Does this mean: Be quiet when you go to church? Or, let God do the talking!?**

**Slow to anger—What is our reaction when God challenges our behavior? Do we get mad, upset, or indignant? When someone preaches the truth and it “steps on our toes” or “hits home” and we think, “He is preaching to me”, do we become offended and withdraw? (Do you get mad at the postman when he bring you an expensive bill from the power company?)**

What is your attitude toward God and His word?

#### **We need to put aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, and in humility receive the word implanted that is able to save our souls, v. 21**

We need to see our sins as if they were dirty garments that are repulsive and make us smell bad. Cf. the man in the service in Brno. There is a spiritual version.

**James says, we need to keep working until we have put aside all that is wrong in our lives. How often do we say, “I know I’m not perfect” or “I know I have a problem with that, but...” . How much dirt can we tolerate?**

#### **We need to receive the word with “meekness”.**

Some translations have struggled with the word and decided to re-translate with terms like “gentleness” or “humility”. Actually, meekness is what you would have if you put the two together. The Greeks used it to describe a well-trained horse. It means we are willing to remain gentle and quiet, and humble when brought under the Lordship of God and His word.

What are you presently working on? What are you trying to improve in? Have you evaluated and made some goals to change something about your life that needs correcting? Let's not rush past that word "implanted". The word "has to do more than just pass over our heads. It has to penetrate our hearts". And that takes us to our next principle.

### **We need to be doers, not just hearers, v. 22-25**

Going to church is a good thing; but often we confuse the distinction between hearing and doing. When we go to church, we do a good thing, because it gives us a chance to hear what God says. But it is really easy to substitute hearing what God says for doing it!

**I've known of people who traveled about the country attending various Bible lectureships. They enjoy hearing good preaching and worshipping. Fine, but I've often wondered, "When do these people apply what they've learned?" We can delude ourselves into thinking that hearing the truth makes us right. Believing the right doctrines makes us right. Doing right makes us right!**

James gives a paradigm for application that is simple to understand. Hearing the word is like looking into a mirror. There are some important words here:

**Notice the description of the word. It is the "perfect" law, the law of liberty" that "blesses" us when we obey it. First, we have to value the word itself. We have to see that it provides the only standard to make us complete and to set us free and to bring us into divine favor or blessing. Cf. immediately forgotten in v. 24 with "looks intently" in v. 25! No preaching or Bible study does you any good that does not produce prolonged reflection or meditation. If by Sunday lunch, you've forgotten what you heard Sunday morning, it hasn't done you much good.**

**Notice the idea of "effectual doer". If we can't find ways to apply the message you've heard, then how will it help us? How can we put into motion what we've learned?**

### **We need to test ourselves with specifics, v. 26-27.**

Did you ever find a Christian that said, "I don't want to obey God. I don't want to live right"? In fact, hearing a sermon on James one may set us up for the very delusion James was seeking to avoid. What disciple would disagree with the points made in this lesson? Yet, that is the point. We may agree with them and never change unless we test ourselves by specifics (v. 26-27).

**Did we control our tongue this past week? Did we say angry things to and about others? Did we use God's name irreverently? Did we speak up for God when we had the opportunity? Did we give thanks and pray for others? Did we visit the fatherless and widows in their distress? Was there someone we could have helped who was in need**

**and neglected to do so? When was the last time we visited a shut-in? Are there some clothes we could donate or some food to share?**

**Did we keep ourselves unspotted from the world? Did any of the works of the flesh pollute our garments? Anger, lust**

**Conclusion: It's one thing to be religious. It's another thing altogether to say, "I want to be a child of God. I want to let His word transform me into someone that bears His likeness. Today, we've talked about the right way to respond to salvation.**