

James 1:19-22
March 8, 2020

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” James 1:19-22

PRAY

Two weeks into the year, my wife’s phone rang and on the other end was a detective from the Tempe Police Department. You should check your credit because someone was arrested that was using your husbands identity for a variety of things—Possibly Including:

- Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices
- Aggravated Taking Identity of Another
- Theft of Means of Transportation

Then we got more specifics—from the detective.

“I specifically would look for anything having to do with vehicles. I did see one partial email displayed on his phone stating “Coleman, they have one Mustang available”. The email appeared to be from “Rodo” or that was the only thing showing instead of the full return email address.”

So Rodo contacted fake me to get a real Mustang.

Then we got even more details. Specifically this:

(Pictures of real and fake
drivers licenses)

He was trying to impersonate me. He was going by my name in order to buy a car. Rodo thought he was me.

His deception was good.

He had my name.

He had my address.

He had my signature.

He had my AZ license.

But he wasn't who he claimed to be. He wasn't me.

It would take other tools to expose his deception. In my case it was the Tempe Police Department.

James is going to give us a set of tools today to expose a possible deception in our lives. The deception he is looking to expose is one that we can carry on against ourselves.

We all have the capacity to deceive ourselves and think we a faithful follower of Jesus when, in fact we are not. It is easy to deceive ourselves by saying—

I call myself a Christian

I have been baptized

I have prayed a prayer

I know Christian truth

None of these things alone prove that you are a follower of Jesus. All of these things may be true, but you could be deceived.

How dangerous it is to be deceived!

And yet not be who you think you are.

PROP: Don't be deceived, believers are doers of the word.

Believers are doers.

There are some here who

- Are not followers of Jesus and know it.
- Are followers and of Jesus and know it.
- Are followers and don't know it.
- Are not followers and do not know it.

The last category is who James is speaking to today. Those who are not followers of Jesus and do not know it.

James is going to us see through deception by presenting a—

- A situation
- The solution
- A summary

1. A Situation: Anger(James 1:19-20)

James chooses a temptation we can all relate to—and have given in to: Anger. All of us are tempted to by anger. By using a temptation common to all, James takes the first step in unmasking the possible self-deception.

He uses the topic of anger precisely because all of us can understand it. Right? When over coffee a friend says, “I got angry at my kids yesterday.” You don’t say, “What? How could you?”

You get it.

If that same friend over coffee says, “I wanted to know my future so I contacted a medium to speak to the dead.” OR “I conducted a séance last night.” You probably aren’t going to say, “I am tempted toward necromancy too.”

That is why using the topic of anger is brilliant. He brings up the topic of anger here and none of us have to wonder, “What is like to get angry?”

No, we remember back to the last time we got angry.

I don’t know you all well—but I know you all understand anger.

Vs. 19,

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

Verse 19 is not primarily about how to speak, that comes in James 3. James shows us the road that we often take toward anger. Anger at another flares when we are:

Slow to hear

Quick to speak
And therefore Quick to anger

The anger James is thinking about here is not:

- Anger at yourself
- Anger at evil

BUT

- Anger at others

And when it comes to others our anger flares when we are:

Slow to hear
Quick to speak
And therefore Quick to anger

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

James is as clear as a stop sign. A stop sign stands there giving its unambiguous, easy to understand message to any who come near—STOP.

How are we to interact with the people in our lives?

Be

Quick to hear
Slow to speak
Slow to anger

We hear those words and can't say: That is a mystery
I wonder what James is getting at.

No, we know exactly what he is getting at—what?

Quick to hear
Slow to speak
Slow to anger

We don't have to study what those words mean.
We don't have to pray about how to respond.
We don't need to go away and ponder.

Simple.
Quick to hear
Slow to speak
Slow to anger

Neither are we invited to be thinking of others when
James is telling us to be thinking about ourselves. The
sense of this is:

You be:

Quick to hear
Slow to speak
Slow to anger

Quick to hear: Hear what others in your life have to
say. Listen for understanding. Be quick to hear
because others are going to be able to see and
understand things you don't.

Slow to speak: Is there anything unnatural? This does not mean we should NEVER speak but that we should be slow to speak. How easy it is to be formulating a response while the other person is speaking and then we blurt it out.

Slow to anger: This doesn't mean that there aren't things to be angry at: injustice, oppression, murder, racism. But James is saying we should be slow to be angry at others. Most of the time we get angry it is when something happens to us we think is wrong, we don't like, we are offended by. We get angry because of slights, snubs, thoughtlessness, insults and unkindness.

And often we get angry quickly.

James does not just tell us what NOT to do, he also gives the reason we should be

Quick to hear
Slow to speak
Slow to anger

Why?

²⁰ for (because) the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Anger toward others does not befit the godly. Or said a different way—Anger does not lead to obedience or righteousness but disobedience and unrighteousness.

We are called to be more and more like our Father. We are to be more and more godly, and anger is not godly. Here is how the Lord describes himself,

“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, [7] keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin....”
Exodus 34:6-7a

A life defined by anger does not lead to godliness, but ungodliness.

Anger is not something you can control, anger is something that will control you. You can't play with anger and put off into one little section of your life, anger always spreads.

That is the situation—anger.

Are we saying that no genuine Christian gets angry?

NO!

Because believers are doers of the word, no genuine Christian will be dominated by and defined by anger, but I am getting ahead of myself.

Thus far, we don't have enough tools to diagnose our condition. Believers and Unbelievers alike get angry. BUT a differentiation occurs in our next point.

2. The Solution: Expel & Receive (James 1:21)

PROP: Don't be deceived, believers are doers.

Part of faithfulness is a proper response to sin—what is it?

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Identify filthiness and rampant wickedness and expel it. James is not moving to another subject here. Notice how he views anger toward others—

Filthy
Wicked

We can say—I get angry because:

He made me!
She made me!
My dad got angry!
I'm Sicilian and we get angry.

No excuses.

How does the Lord view angry speech toward others?

Filthy
Wicked

Angry people are dressed in clothes of filth and rampant wickedness. No one would wear clothes marinated in sewage. No one would put on a shirt slathered in dung. No one when asked about wearing feces covered clothes would say:

It is just what I do.
It is part of who I am.
My family wore clothes like this.

No. But that is what we do when we make excuses for angry speech.

How does a Christian respond when she sees a pattern of anger in her life?
How does a Christian respond when he smells the clothing of anger in his life?

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Expel the filth and wickedness of anger.
Throw it away.
Get rid of it.

It is never enough just to renounce bad actions, we must also replace them with something else. In this case—

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Expel filth
Receive the word

Receive with meekness the implanted word. That is a strange turn of a phrase. How can you receive something that it already implanted in you?

It gets to the very nature of how a follower of Jesus responds to the word of God. At regeneration, the word is implanted in the genuine believer. James is saying that the genuine believer will be corrected and reproofed in his anger by the word of God.

Or in other words, believers must allow the word of God to continue to influence them throughout their whole lives. Genuine believers are going to want the Bible to round off harsh angry edges in their lives.

Believer won't fall into the deception that they can't do anything to change—false—they will read, sing, and hear the word preached and receive it with humility.

An aside: One of the core values at Center Church is that we value the Word of God as authoritative in the life of all believers. That all believers need to a steady diet of the word of God.

For us that means we are going to preach books of the Bible and not just topics. We need to know the Bible and not just topics. Easy to preach:

- How to be happy
- How to have a great marriage
- How to overcome disappointments
- How to be great parents
- How to be wise with your money
- How to have the life of your dreams

Some of those things are in the Bible, but none of those things are in the Bible. What we need most is

not teaching on particular topics. We need to let the Bible have its say. When we preach primarily topics we learn some things but we do not learn the scriptures.

For example, the book of James. There are things he is going to say that I would NEVER say up in front of a group. But this is God's word and God's people need God's word.

We need to receive it humbly.

Expel Filth/Receive the word

Receive the word—

When it comes to the word of God:

Be quick to hear
Be slow to think you understand
Be slow to think you are an exception

We all need to receive with meekness the word of God. This means we must:

Read the Word
Sit under preaching of the word.
Be regular on Sundays.

Consider the hearing of the word of God as one of the most important things in your life. Sunday is that important.

Church is that important. If for no other reason than to come someone else determine what part of God's

word you hear. Those who remove themselves from fellowship with others often also remove themselves from followership to Christ.

We need to regularly receive the implanted word with meekness.

Why?

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

The word is able to save your souls.

You'll notice this is a future orientation. You might say, I'm saved. James would respond by saying—good! Those that are saved never outgrow their need to hear and receive the word of God.

Sometimes you need the word to:

- Challenge you
- Encourage you
- Exhort you
- Comfort you
- Control you
- Confine you
- Sustain you
- Lay you low
- Bring you up
- Correct
- Inspire

But you always need to receive it with meekness.

So what have we learned?

The word of God has told us thus far to take anger and strip it away from you, expel it and keep listening to the word.

Why? Believers are doers of the word.

There is a sighting of hope here. If you smell the stench of anger and want to change—you can cast it away and change.

Why? Because we have the strength to obey perfectly and completely?

NO!

Because our Lord came to die for those clothed in the filth of angry attire. He clothed himself in humility and gives us grace and not anger if we come to him and ask for help.

He has great reason to be angry with us—but he is not.

The presence of anger in your life does NOT mean you are not a Christian—we all struggle—but rather the danger is when you know you have anger in your life and you don't do anything about it. That is the danger zone.

Don't be deceived, believers are doers.

Faithful to identify anger, cast it off and obey.

A Situation
The Solution

Now, the summary

3. The Summary: Do. (James 1:22)

Vs. 22

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Believers are doers.

Again. Simple. Hard.

And here we get to the danger of deception. It is a self-deception that all of us has the capacity to tote around.

We can hear the word and think that we understand but yet it does not impact our life and we can think we are okay. False.

The peril of merely hearing the word and not being shaped by it is venomous deception.

You might be thinking:

- You make it sound so easy. My situation is much more complex than that.

I'm sure it is. I'm sure there are a litany of things I do not understand about your situation but don't

confuse complexity with difficulty. Sometimes we can think that our situation is so difficult when what is really difficult is the obedience Jesus is calling us to.

Being a doer of the word is difficult. Often heart-wrenching.

The Lord shows us the way to avoid self-deception—obedience to the word of God.

Is there any place in your life you are delaying obedience?

Hear the word and obey the word.

- Don't think about doing it—do it.
- Don't study about doing it—do it.
- Don't muse over doing it—do it.
- Don't pray about doing it—do it.

You might be thinking:

- I am believe in Jesus and have served him for years.

Excellent.

But are you a doer of the word, or merely a hearer deceiving yourself?

- This means that you might know the right things about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.

- You may be able to have the knowledge to instruct the angels but not be a doer of the word and be deceived.
- You may be able to preach to thousands and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.
- You may know a lot of scripture and but it doesn't impact your life, and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.
- You might be able to grasp the inner-workings of the Trinity, and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.
- You might be able to explain grace to make statues cry, and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.
- You might read your Bible each day, and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.
- You might pray fire down like Elijah, and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.
- You might be have a voice to rouse the dead, and yet not be a doer of the word, and be deceived.

At this point, some of you might be scared. You might think—I am not who I am supposed to be. I do not do like I ought to.

Are you a doer of the word?

Are you living a life of obedience to the word of God?

Repent.

Are you living a life of obedience?

Or are you deceiving yourself?

It is so easy to say to yourself, “There is no way I can be deceived because I believe all the right things.”

But are you a doer? If not you are deceived.

There are many people who pass every test of orthodoxy but will find themselves in eternal torment along with their good theology. You can be filled with good theology, but have an empty soul.

He who trusts in his knowledge about God, Jesus, the Bible alone is lost. Good theology alone never got anyone into the kingdom of heaven.

Instead of point to right belief, there are other who point to spiritual exploits. Maybe you have been a missionary, given away scads of money, exorcised demons, and served others tirelessly.

But are you a doer of the word? If not, you are deceived.

What can we say?

That no past spiritual experience—however meaningful—is proof of life in Christ. No gift or ability—however significant—is proof of Life in

Christ's name. And no amount of mighty works done is ground alone for confidence of salvation.

Two dangerous spiritual fault lines are: false confidence based on true words & False confidence based on Great deeds.

All genuine Christians follow him in obedience. The essential characteristic of a true believer is obedience to Jesus Christ.

Are we saved by our works of obedience?

No. Not at all. Real faith always bears the fruit of Christlikeness. A different sort of life will emerge from all those vitally connected to Jesus.

You will want to obey Christ.
You will want to please Jesus.
You will want to obey Jesus.
You will want to serve Jesus.

Not perfectly, just faithfully.

Are you a doer?

Two kinds of fear this morning:

Legitimate & Illegitimate

Illegitimate Fear—

I realize there is danger in a sermon like this, a danger of destabilizing genuine believers in Jesus. I don't want to do that. I realize some of you are built of

sensitive stuff and a message like this might send you off into morbid introspection.

I don't want to do that. But I do want to speak a word of comfort to you. Jesus will uphold all those who genuinely seek to follow him.

You might think: What about the sins I don't know about? You can't do anything about them today.

But Jesus has done something about them. He was a doer who saw and paid for all our sins. We must be doers of the word.

But only he was faultless in his obedience.

Be a doer of the word.

You have nothing to fear when you follow Jesus closely.

Legitimate Fear —

I do want to instill some fear into some of you. There are those of you here who have false assurance of your salvation.

I want you most of all to feel the heart of the Savior here for you. He is judge, but he is a caring, loving judge who desires none to be lost. That you are here today hearing this message is a wonderful kindness from Jesus.

Jesus stands ready to help those who are honest about who they are before God. Who are deceived.

PRAY

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...” Col. 1:9-10