



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

TRUE FAITH RECEIVES GOD'S WORD – JAMES 1:19-21

COLORADO

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James is a practical book that teaches us about a faith that is real. As we have seen from the first chapter so far; a true faith endures trials to maturity (James 1:1-12), a genuine faith does not give in to temptation to sin (James 1:13-17), and a living faith is brought forth by the Word of Truth, the Word of God (James 1:18). Not only is the Word of God the originator of our faith, but it now must become the focal point of our faith for the rest of our lives.

I. TRUE FAITH RECEIVES GOD'S WORD -JAMES 1:19-21

“(18) In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. (19) This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (21) Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” James 1:18-21

As James moves from verses 14-16 in chapter one, to James 1:18, he presents a subtle and intentional contrast between two births. The first birth is seen in 1:14-16 where lust has conceived giving birth to sin and that “brings forth” death. James 1:18 represents the contrasting birth of believers who are conceived by God’s will through His Word. One birth brings forth death and the other brings forth life. One submits to sin and the other submits to God and His Word. And by James’ subtle contrast of births, he introduces us to his new focus on the Word of God. James will continue to elaborate upon this theme throughout the chapter. Having turned his attention now to the Word of God, what does James have to say to us in verses 19-21?

A. “THIS YOU KNOW,” – JAMES 1:19A

“This you know, my beloved brethren...” James 1:19a

First James reminds us of what we know. And what do we know? James points back to the regenerating power of God’s Word in verse 18, which brings about a new birth in Christ thus referring to salvation. But James doesn’t stop there for he reminds the ones he loves so deeply that the regenerating power of the Word of God must also lead to a new life directed by God’s Word. We are to continually submit to His Word, allowing it to continue its’ divine work in and through our lives.¹

B. “BUT LET EVERYONE BE” – JAMES 1:19-20

James implies a difference between what these believers know and now what must be their practice through the use of the word “But”. And he gives them a command. “Let everyone be” is not just an invitation, but rather an

imperative for all believers. Because this phrase is in the Greek present tense, this indicates an ongoing responsibility to “be” something. What?

1. “QUICK TO HEAR” – JAMES 1:19C

What are we to be quick to hear? What is the focal point of the message here in James? Is it not the Word of God? It is imperative, our daily responsibility to be “quick” at hearing God’s Word. And God’s Word will remain the focus through the end of the chapter as James reveals that a true faith is a doer of God’s Word.

“quick” Greek word “*tachus*,” means to be prompt, ready, eager.

“hear” Greek word “*akauo*,” which means to hear effectively so as to grant or perform what is spoken.

James is not just referring to our hearing. The issue is more profound than that. We are to be eager and quick to pursue every occasion to learn and hear more about God from His Word with a willing heart, ready to respond to what is taught. We must have a passion, desire and hunger to receive the Word of God. It is imperative because God’s Word not only brings about salvation, but a true change from the inside out. Are we eager and quick to hear the Word of God? Do we desire to know it, learn from it and live it or does it go in one ear and out another with a half hearted effort?

2. “SLOW TO SPEAK” – JAMES 1:19D

“slow” Greek word “*bradus*,” slow in time as opposite “*tachus*”.

While we are to be quick to hear God’s Word, in contrast we are to exercise caution, taking much time in preparation before assuming the role of a teacher. Not until we have studied God’s Word in order to handle it accurately, should we speak or teach it. (2 Timothy 2:15, James 3:1) We are to speak God’s Word so cautiously with the attitude that we cannot bear the thought of misrepresenting what God has to say. Often it is taken too lightly these days. It is a very big responsibility to carefully and truthfully represent God and His Word and we must not take this lightly.

3. “SLOW TO ANGER” – JAMES 1:19-20

While anger is a response that all of us have experienced, here, James is not talking about an outburst of anger.

“anger” Greek word “*orge*,” meaning anger as a state of mind, a

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deep smoldering resentment, something underneath the surface contrasted with *“thumos”* an outburst of anger, desire for revenge.

James is concerned with our reaction to Scripture. When we hear the Word of God, we should never become angry or build resentment against God and His Word. We may not like what Scripture has to say. We may not like to be confronted with sin in our own lives. It might make us angry or upset. But James commands us to never be hostile or resist the teaching of God and His Word. The warring and fighting mentioned in James 4 is a result of not giving way to God's Word and submitting totally to Scripture in our lives. And as James 1:20 says, any anger in man towards the Word cannot produce the righteousness, the maturity that God intends.

The true believer will listen quickly and eagerly to God's Word willing to submit and obey it. The true believer will be just as slow to speak the Word and will only do so when he/she is prepared to handle it accurately. And one with true faith will not be hostile to the Word of God but will give way to God's work in their life. These verses reveal the contrast of receiving the Word and resisting the Word. Which example shows the habit of your life?

C. “RECEIVE THE WORD” – JAMES 1:21

“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” James 1:21

James sums up what we are called to do with *“Therefore”*. Because we have been brought forth, saved by the Word of God and we are commanded to now live by the Word of God working in our lives, James makes it clear as to how we are to receive the Word.

1. “RECEIVE THE WORD” – JAMES 1:21C

“**receive**” Greek word **“dechomai,”** to accept an offer with a favorable response, deliberately and readily.

James gives us an urgent command that we are to readily receive God's Word, responding favorably to what it has to say. We are to dial in and be turned on to the Word of God just like a radio tunes into a station. As believers, God's Word has been implanted in our heart through the Holy Spirit. It is that Word which is able to save us from the *penalty of sin* through salvation, save us from the *power of sin* through sanctification and save us from the *presence of sin* through our ultimate glorification.

2. “RECEIVE THE WORD WITH HOLINESS” – JAMES 1:21A

“**putting aside**” Greek word **“apotheminoi,”** to take off ones clothes.

“**filthiness**” Greek word **“rhuparia,”** dirty, soiled clothes, comes from dirty filthy wax in the ear. Used in Greece to mean that the wax that was dirty and filthy in the ear and needed to be totally cleaned to be able to hear.

“**wickedness**” Greek word **“kakia,”** evil intent or desire of the mind.

James says that we are to receive the Word of God with holiness by putting aside *all* filthiness which are sinful actions as well as *all* wickedness which are evil, sinful intents or desires. We are to put these away because sin is not pleasing to God and is a serious barrier to hearing and comprehending God's Word just as dirty earwax can hinder our hearing. We are to receive the Word with purity and holiness, dealing with the sin in our lives by putting away all evil actions and desires.

3. “RECEIVE THE WORD WITH HUMILITY” – JAMES 1:21B

Humility refers to meekness, being teachable, gentle, having a willing spirit, a teachable heart that is submissive. James calls us to receive the Word with a teachable, gentle, willing heart, realizing that we are in need of all God has for us. A humble person is one who can learn and be taught by God's Word. It is one who is quick and eager to hear and respond to God's Word, yet slow to the speaking and resisting of God's work.

The *“implanted word”* James speaks of is the Word of God that is growing in the heart of every true believer; planted at the moment of salvation. The true believer responds to God's implanted Word with a submissive, eager, teachable heart, a holy life and a humble spirit, that changes us from the inside out resulting in a transformed life. Is this the picture of what takes place in your life? (Read 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Deut. 8:3, Matthew 13:8, 23)

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, James, Moody Press, 1998, p. 68.