

James 1:19-27

Just Do It

Comedian Bob Newart once played a therapist in a sketch whereby he gives his patients the same advice. In the sketch, a patient complains she lives in fear of being buried in a box. He encourages her the problem can be resolved in under 5 minutes. In fact, two words will suffice, “STOP IT!” Perplexed, the woman tries to dig deeper (no pun intended), but the “therapist” won’t let her. Just, “stop it” he continues to retort.

The sketch is no doubt humorous because of what it illustrates. Although our deep-seated fears deserve more than a pat on the head or bumper sticker slogans, at times it is best to let simple truths resonate. If the patient really wants to be free of such thoughts, the solution is not ultimately to probe her childhood or drown her sorrows in substance abuse. At the end of the day, she simply needs to “stop it.”

James does something similar in the latter half of chapter 1. His message is not for believers to “stop it,” but the opposite, “do it.” Or, as he puts it, “be doers of the word, and not hearers only.” (vs. 22). Christianity is not a difficult religion. Rooted in the faith that Christ is risen from the dead, we pursue his Kingdom and glory in our lives. As he was raised, so are we. Thus, we become “new creatures” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Such obedience requires **Righteous Living**. He begins by exhorting us to “be quick to hear, slow to speak, [and] slow to anger” (vs. 19). Alert social media! Even the most ardent critic of Scripture would agree that this advice would do the world much good. Social media is not the cause of our rhetoric, but a clear revealer of it. Humans have a tendency to presume first and question later. Being quick to speak stirs anger and resent which leads to more verbal abuse and judgmentalism. It is a vicious, consuming cycle. In the place of such “filthiness and rampant wickedness” we should choose “meekness” (vs. 20)

Secondly, we should be **Ready Listeners** of the gospel. The book of James is littered with helpful illustrations. Here, he likens ignoring the gospel with a man who looks in a mirror and ignores the flaws it revealed. What good is that? Perhaps we’ve had that experience of looking at our watch and still not knowing the time. So too, encountering the Word without modifying our behavior is, at best, empty religion. Do not be a “hearer who forgets,” he exhorts, but rather “a doer who acts” (vs. 25). Such a person “will be blessed in his doing” (vs. 25).

Finally, we should be **Real Servants**. In these final two verses, James exhorts us to demonstrate true spiritual growth in three areas. First, to bridle our tongue (an issue he’ll return to). As already hinted

at above, perhaps nothing is more damaging than words. The simple act of sanctifying our tongue would significantly make the world a better place. Secondly, Christians ought to care for others. James emphasizes both the orphan and the widow, but we can easily extend gracious generosity beyond them. Christians are called to love our neighbors regardless of their circumstances.

Finally, James exhorts us to remain “unstained from the world” (vs. 27). In Jewish religion, stains come from ceremonial uncleanness. Such a system was to remind the Jews they live in a broken, dirty world full of shame and guilt. To be stained by the world would involve getting too close and allowing ourselves to be corrupted and influence by its false gospel.

Ultimately, James simply wants us to be like Jesus. We could continue to discuss the specifics, but at the end of the day, let us go and do it. That is all he wants in the end.