

# The Christian Arsenal

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## JAMES 1:19-2:13

Last week we began our study in the book of **James**. I hope you've read through this book several times. If you have, you've found that James covers a variety of subjects. And all these subjects are so relevant to the Christian life...then and now.

James 1:19-20...

Many people deceive themselves into thinking they are saved when in truth they never have been. The Bible tells us that one day, many will say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord, have we not **prophesied in Your name?** and in Your name **cast out devils?** and in Your name **done many wonderful works?**" And Jesus will say them, "**Depart from Me. I never knew You.**"

But, did it ever occur to you that **believers** can also deceive themselves?

In this passage and in the following verses James tells us that true believers can fool themselves concerning their walk with Jesus. I want us to see today that a believer will never have that mature walk with the Lord that we talked about last week aside from the word of God.

**Verses 19 and 20** seem to be unrelated to what we saw last week...but I believe the bridge for **last** week's lesson and **this** week's lesson is **verse 18**. We really didn't have time to cover that verse last week. But, in **verse 18**, James tells us that *in the exercise of God's will He brought us forth by the **word of truth**, so that we might be the first fruits of His creatures.*

Then in **verses 19 and 20** and the following verses we see a **continued emphasis** on the word of God...

The first three words in **verse 19**...**This you know**...refer back to what we've just seen in **verse 18**, that the Word of God is a vital part of our salvation. The Word of God is not only a vital part of our salvation, but is also a vital part of our sanctification.

**Paul told Timothy that "Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..."**

Why? Paul said, "**...so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work...**"

So, James gives us **three imperatives**. He says be **quick to hear**. He says to be **slow to speak**. He says to be **slow to anger**.

What are we to be **quick to hear**? I believe within the context of this chapter, the primary reference goes back to **verse 18**. We are to be quick to hear the Word of God! Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God! If we are to be faithful, mature Christians, we must hear the word of God!

I believe James is telling us to be **a very careful listener**.

I love to read **1 Samuel** when the Lord was speaking to Samuel and Samuel was just a boy and didn't know the Lord yet and didn't yet recognize the Lord's voice.

Young Samuel went to old Eli and asked him twice if **he** had called him. Old Eli knew it was the Lord who had called to Samuel and he gave Samuel great counsel. He told him, "Samuel, go lie back down, If you hear the voice again, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Thy servant is listening.'"

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And I believe God wants us to say the same thing to Him. When we go to His word, we need to say, "Speak, Lord, I am here, I want to serve You and I am listening."

Then, James tells us to be **slow to speak!** We have two ears and one mouth and aren't you glad? This ought to remind us to **listen** twice as often and twice as much as we **speak!** And I'm afraid the reason we don't hear God speaking to us many times is because we're busy talking!

In the early church the services were very informal and often the listeners would debate with the teachers. Sometimes the teachers weren't grounded in the Word and sometimes the listeners knew more than the teachers or thought they did. Anyway, there would often be **wrangling over words...criticism and disagreement.**

So, James says not only to be **swift to hear** and **slow to speak**...but he follows this with saying we are to be **slow to anger**...

Why? Because the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. The anger of man does not accomplish what is right in God's eyes. In fact, anger is just the opposite of the patience and longsuffering God wants to produce in our lives as we mature in the Lord Jesus Christ!

And if you ever want to lose your Christian witness...be **slow to listen, quick to speak** and **quick to anger!**

In the rest of this chapter we see James continuing to teach about the Word of God!

## Verse 21...

James said we are to receive the implanted word "which is able to **save your souls.**"

James is writing to Christians. Christians are folks whose soul has already been saved. **Why then, would James say this?**

James isn't talking about something in the past...James is talking about something in the present tense. The Greek word for "soul" is the word we get our English word "psyche" from...psychology, psychiatry.

Your "soul" is that part of you, that self-identity, that we might say is **"the real you."** It is the mind, the emotion and the will.

And may I say to you...this is where the battle goes on! Many of us need victory in this battle! We need God's truth to enter our mind, our emotion and will and we need God's truth to deliver our "psyche"...**"the real us"** day by day!

We need to be saved day by day...**from failure!**

We live in a world that does everything to destroy the victory in our lives. The **enemy** comes against us. The **world** comes against us. The **flesh** comes against us. God wants us to have victory!

James says right here that we are to *receive* the word of God. This word for **"receive"** comes from a Greek word that means **"to welcome."** We are to receive it like we receive a guest into our home...**"Hey come on in. I'm so glad you came."**

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Well, how do we do this? How do we **receive** this precious Word of God in such a way that it will give us this victory we need day by day? I believe there are **four ways**. **We must receive the Word of God with**

## 1) A Repentant Spirit...

### Verse 21...

"...putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness..." (NAS)

The word "filthiness" is closely related to a Greek word that has the meaning of **wax in the ear**. Now, some folks get a buildup of earwax from time to time and must go to the doctor and get their ears cleaned out so they can hear.

And that's what James is saying here...he is saying in order to hear the Word of God, you have to get **your spiritual ears cleaned up...you must get any filth out of your life**. You don't need anything in your life that would keep you from hearing God's Word.

Then, he says we must put aside **"all that remains of wickedness."** This has the idea of **"that which is left over."** When you and I got saved and we repented of our sin and gave our hearts to Christ our hearts changed.

But, is there one of us who would dare say that after you got saved, there is no more sin in your life? Is there anyone here with that testimony? No! Of course not...we all have that old sin nature just waiting to raise its ugly head, don't we?

But, if you want to receive God's Word so that you will have victory in your life, you must come with a repentant spirit. **Do you want God to speak to you? Do you?** Then, before you study the Bible, bow your head and deal with the spiritual wax in your ear that makes you dull of hearing. And deal with any sin that keeps God from speaking to you.

This verse speaks of the **"implanted word."** Before you plant a garden, what do you do? You prepare the soil, don't you? I mean, you don't just walk out in the yard and start putting seeds in the ground.

No, first you take the weeds out and any rocks or debris you till the soil and you make it as ready and as fertile as you can to receive the seed.

And before we can receive the implanted word, we must weed the garden and make it clean! We must get rid of the filthiness! We must get rid of the remaining wickedness! And we must receive the Word of God with a repentant spirit.

If we're not willing to do this, then we're not really going to understand the Word of God as we should!

Not only are to receive the Word of God with a **repentant spirit**, but we must also receive the Word of God with

## 2) A Receptive Spirit

### Verse 21... **"...in humility..." or "...in meekness..."**

This word doesn't mean weakness. Jesus was meek, but He wasn't weak. Moses is called the meekest man who ever lived, but Moses was a great deliverer and a great leader.

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This word means "**a teachable spirit.**" It's the idea of "**brokenness.**" We must be certain the soil is **clean** enough to receive the seed of the Word of God, but we must also be sure the soil is **broken** enough to receive the seed of the Word.

When a wild stallion is made so that the rider can ride him, they "break" that stallion. What does that mean? It means that they get him where he has a "teachable spirit." What they do is they get a bridle and get on his back and stay on him until he learns to yield to the reins and to the bit.

They don't want to **weaken** him! They don't want to take away his **spirit** or his **fire** or his **speed!** They just simply want to bring him under control.

And when you have a **yielded** spirit, a **teachable** spirit, then God can teach you! This doesn't mean you lay aside your intellect, or your sense of humor, or your questions...

This simply means that you come to God's Word with a deep longing in your heart for God to teach you. When you receive the Word of God with meekness, you accept it, you don't argue with it, and you honor it as the Word of God. Don't try to twist it to conform to **your** thinking. Allow God to conform you to **His** thinking!

Well, if we're going to receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls, we must also receive it with

### 3) A Reflective Spirit

**Verse 22-25...**

God's Word is described in many metaphors and similes and figures of speech. And here is a beautiful one. God's Word is described as a **mirror**.

When you look into a mirror, not only do you see the mirror, but the mirror sees you. And when you look into God's Word there is a reflection...**not only do you read the Bible, but the Bible reads you. And that's the reason some folks don't read the Bible!**

I want us to think of two different ways people look into a mirror.

People look in a mirror with a **passing glance**...

People also sit down in front of a mirror and **study themselves**.

Now we all do both. We've all been walking through a room and we've seen a mirror and we glance at ourselves in it. We check to see how our hair looks or if our makeup is okay. We all do that...nothing really wrong with it, is there? We just quickly glance and then we forget about it...just a casual glance.

In **verse 23**, James talks about a "**casual glance**" at God's Word. And that's the way some people look at the Word of God. They just **glance** into it.

They'll just pick up the Bible and they'll just thumb through it and they'll get a verse and they call it doing their morning or evening devotions, and they couldn't tell you two hours later **what** they read or **where** they read it.

Why? Because they didn't really reflect upon what they saw.

They looked into the mirror of God's Word, but there was no real reflection on it.

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But, James used another word. The word for **"looks"** in **verse 23** means a casual glance, but in **verse 25**, he uses a word that means a **"careful gaze."** It means **"to study"** or **"to scrutinize."**

The best illustration of what James is talking about would be found back in the **Gospel of John**.

Remember that after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ when Mary came and told Peter and John that the tomb was empty and John outran Peter to the tomb and the Bible says that when he looked into the tomb, **he didn't give that tomb a quick glance...he gazed intently at that tomb...he studied that tomb...he looked reflectively into that tomb.**

Do you read the Bible that way? Paul told Timothy, **"Study** to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed **rightly** dividing the Word of truth."

Let me give you a list of some things I wrote in the flyleaf of my Bible several years ago... As you look into the mirror of God's Word, ask yourself these questions...

**Is there a promise to claim?** (Always be looking for the promises of God when you reflect on God's Word. All His promises are "yea and Amen." They are "yes in Christ Jesus." What He has promised, He is also able to perform!!!)

**Is there a lesson to learn?** (Ask the Lord if He's trying to teach you something from the passage you just read.)

**Is there a blessing to enjoy?** (Just **reading** the Word of God is a blessing, but many times when we really **reflect** on His Word, He will give us a **special blessing**, won't He?)

**Is there a command to obey?** (If you read something like *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things will be added unto you..."* then, the rest of the day what should you do? You should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...and rely on the promise that all the other things you need will be yours...)

**Is there a sin to avoid?** (I believe we'll see in the **Book of James** several sins we should avoid.)

**Is there a new thought to carry with me and share with someone?** (I love for folks to share with me something they've discovered from the Word because many times it's something **I've** never seen.)

If you'll just put those six questions in the flyleaf of your Bible and then as you intently reflect on God's Word with a **repentant spirit** and a **receptive spirit** and a **reflective spirit**, I believe the implanted Word will come alive to you like never before.

One last thing on this passage... We must receive God's Word with

## 4) A Responsive Spirit

Verse 22...

**This is the bottom line! We must respond to what we learn!**

**If we don't respond to what we learn, then we deceive ourselves!**

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The trouble with many people is that they want Bible knowledge for Bible knowledge sake! I heard Dr. Rogers put it this way...**They come to church and they're liked a sponge...they sit, they soak, they sour and they stink!**

God didn't give us His precious Word to make us smart. God gave us His precious Word to make us more like Jesus.

We don't ever read in God's Word that Jesus just sat around, doing nothing! And if our knowledge of the Bible is not making us more like Jesus, we are the victim of one grand self-delusion!

We will never know God by **studying** the Bible! We know God by **obeying** the Bible!

We will know **about** God by studying the Bible! We'll **know** God when we **obey** the Bible!

Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and **keeps** them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

**The man who has His commandments and keeps them is the man to whom Jesus reveals Himself and then the Bible becomes a living reality and a source of victory.**

The remainder of this chapter and really the rest of the **Book of James** continues this thought and teaches us how to be **doers of the Word...**

## **Verse 26...**

I believe it's interesting that James tells us the first way true Christianity is revealed to others is by what **we say**.

It is the **tongue** that reveals the heart. If the tongue is not controlled by God, we can know that the heart isn't either.

We all know folks who do all the right things outwardly...they appear to be "very religious", but their tongue betrays them! I believe each and every morning, we should lay our tongue on the altar and pray, "Lord put a guard upon my lips."

**More harm and hurt are caused by the tongue than anything else! More misunderstandings are caused by the tongue than anything else!**

## **Verse 27...**

The second way our Christianity is revealed to others is by what **we do**.

Generally, the neediest people in the early church were the widows and the orphans. There was no life insurance, no pensions, no Social Security...very few jobs for women...

**It fell to the people in the church to care for these folks.**

And there are folks we should care for today. Some **may** be widows and orphans...some may be folks who are just hurting for a variety of reasons. But, God hasn't saved you and me to sit on our hands and do nothing.

**He expects each of us to look around us and see those who need help and then with love and with a pure heart we must help them.**

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Well, in the time we have left, let's very, very quickly look at **chapter 2...**

## **Verses 1-4...**

James is telling us what you and I already know...but James is telling us to put what we know into practice, isn't he?

I believe the only way we can avoid an attitude of personal favoritism is to look at everyone through the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ!

If a visitor comes into our church and he's not dressed as nicely as the rest of us is a **Christian**, we can accept him **because Christ lives in him!** If the visitor is **not** a Christian, we can accept him **because Christ died for him.**

## **Verses 5-7...**

God has a great deal to say about how the rich man treats the poor man. If the rich man mistreats the poor man, he will someday have to answer for it. The poor man can be rich in spiritual things and that is the important thing to see. God promised His kingdom to **"those who love Him"**, not to those who love the world and its riches.

## **Verses 8-11...**

James is saying that we break the entire law if we don't show love to our neighbors. He uses adultery and murder as examples.

Showing Christian love does not mean that I must **like** a person and **agree** with him on everything. I may not like his vocabulary or his habits, and I may not want him for an intimate friend. **Christian love means treating others the way God has treated me!** It is an act of the **will**, not of the **emotion**.

## Verses 12-13...

Will you and I face judgment? **No...not for our sins.** But, our **works** will be judged! The works we've done after salvation will either be rewarded or they will be burned up!

And I believe that's why the **Book of James** is so important!

**We need to know that our good works don't save us, but we are saved for good works.**

The good works James has emphasized in this chapter are so basic. We are to treat everyone alike. We are to see folks through the eyes of Christ. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

We should never look at a poor person who seems to be a total failure and say, **"Well, he's much too far gone to receive Christ."** And by the same token, we should never look at a very successful person and say, **"Well, he's got too much going for him that he wouldn't even think he needs Christ."**

When you came to Jesus, did He put requirement on your coming? Did He say, "Well, when you've been free from sin for one week, you can become My child?" No! Of course not. None of us would be His children, would we. We come just as He found us...

Charlotte Elliott was a young lady of thirty years old when her health failed and she sank into deep depression. One night a famous Swiss evangelist of that day named Dr. Caesar Malan, visited her home in Brighton, England.

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Dr. Malan witnessed to Miss Elliott that night and said to her, "You must come just as you are, a sinner, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Miss Elliott bowed and received the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior that night and every year after that she celebrated the day on which Dr. Malan had led her to a personal relationship with Christ as her spiritual birthday.

She never forgot the words Dr. Malan spoke to her and fourteen years after she accepted the Lord Jesus as her Savior, Miss Elliott sat down and wrote the words to "Just as I Am."

"Just as I am, without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for me.  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, tho tossed about with many conflict, and many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind...sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea, all I need in Thee to find...O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse relieve,  
Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God. I come! I come!

***This is the basis on which all of us, no matter who we are, must come to Christ! He loves us all just the same. His death at Calvary was for all just the same. If He so loved all of us this way, how can we treat folks any differently?***