

More Lessons from James

In last week's **NEWSLETTER**, we looked at a number of lessons that we learn from the study of the letter that James wrote. One of the things I said about James is that I love his practical teaching concerning how to live the way God expects us to live.

First, we looked at the fact that the difficulties in our lives are to be appreciated. As a matter of fact, we are told to consider those trials and temptations "JOY." The reason? They help us to develop perseverance. Facing hardships and overcoming them with God's help makes the next bit of trouble easier to manage.

Second, we're told not to be conceited, thinking that any of us are better than anyone else. James says everyone will "fade away" and be judged based upon the good life lived, not success or wealth. This echoes Jesus' words: **"the last will be first, the first will be last."**

Third, James tells us that we are responsible for our own sins, not God. We do not get to use as an excuse for our tendency to sin that we were made by God and given free will. We choose sin; God did not make us sin.

In James **1:22-25**, James tells us all:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do."

This is a lot like Jesus' story about one man building a house on sand and the other man building his house on rock. In that parable, Jesus says In **Matthew 7:26** that **"everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand."** That man knows what to do to build a stable, secure house, but didn't follow the instructions. Jesus' words tell us how to build a solid secure life if we will but follow them. The man who built his house on rock was successful at building a solid, secure life that could survive any misfortune. His life, with Jesus' words as a foundation, would be strong enough to withstand any test.

James says that if you look into a mirror and see the things that need to be done (wash your face, shave, comb your hair, put on makeup, etc.) and don't do those things, you're like a person who merely listened to the word and didn't do what the word of God says to improve your spiritual "attractiveness" to Him. We are instructed to do what the word tells us to do and we will be blessed if we do.

One more thing from James 1: Watch your mouth! More on that in the next **NEWSLETTER**.