

## Sincere Faith:

*An Exposition of the Book of James*

**Sermon Five:** Sincere Growth

June 20, 2021

**Opening ILL:** A few weeks ago we talked about how the pursuit of a Christian life without trials is, according to Samuel Rutherford, “the greatest temptation out of hell.” If that is true (after all, can we really say what the greatest temptation is?), then the second greatest temptation out of Hell would be the idea of a Christian life without obedience. To live without obeying God is one of the things that the Devil tempted our Lord with. See Matthew 4:1-10. Christians have always fought the enticement of the idea that obedience is simply optional...it is something only the “Super Sacred” have to worry about. We will see this morning that this is not the case. Our growth in obedience shows ourselves and others that we are sincere.

**Quote:** Sincerity is the same in a corner alone, as it is before the face of all the world. It knows not how to wear two masks, one for an appearance before men, and another for private use. It must have God, and be with him in the duty of prayer. –John Bunyan

### I. A Sincere Review:

#### A. What have we been talking about?

1. The need for us to change our thinking.
  - a. About trials
  - b. About riches
  - c. About temptation/blame/guilt
2. The need for us to pursue sincerity and consistency in our walk with Christ.
  - a. Considering it all joy when we face trials.
  - b. Boasting in our own lowliness and the exalted character of God.
  - c. Refusing to blame others (especially God) for our failures.

#### B. What will we talk about today?

1. The need to grow in some key areas of the Christian life.
2. The need to listen, to live and to learn.

### II. Sincere Growth in Active Listening (James 1:19-20)

#### A. What are we called to?

1. Be quick to hear.
  - a. Notice that this is not simply commanding that we listen. It is more than that.
  - b. This is commanding that we be EAGER to listen.
  - c. This means that we are called to genuinely and humbly desire to interact with others and their thoughts/ opinions.
  - d. Are you quick to hear?
    - i. Are you just waiting for an opportunity to interrupt?
    - ii. Are you just looking for an error to pounce on?

**ILL:** Have you ever had a conversation in which you feel like you really didn’t need to be there and that a cardboard cutout of yourself would serve the same purpose? Ex: [guy from MI] “I haven’t spoken to my wife in months! I said, “What’s going on?” He said: “I was always taught not to interrupt.”

2. Be slow to speak.

**Cross-reference:** Have them turn to James 3:1-12. Remind them that we will unpack this passage later.

- a. Notice that this is not commanded that we never speak.
  - i. There are sins of omission in the area of speech, just like any other sin. That’s not James’ point.
- b. Make sure that when you talk, that you know what you are talking about.

- c. Make sure before you speak that what you are about to say is necessary.
  - d. If you don't, then maybe consider keeping your mouth shut about whatever the topic is.
  - e. Otherwise, you may be embarrassed when you are exposed in your ignorance.
3. Be slow to anger.
- a. Notice that this does not say, "Never be angry."
    - i. God is referred to as "angry" in the Bible (although this could be anthropomorphism).
      - a) **Zechariah 1:2** "The LORD was very angry with your fathers.
    - ii. Jesus was angry (a couple times), so we know that anger is not necessarily sinful.
      - a) **John 2:13-17**
    - iii. This is made explicit in **Ephesians 4:26-27** BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and do not give the devil an opportunity.

### **B. Why is this important?**

1. Because the anger of humanity does not reach the level of God's righteousness.
  - a. Only God is perfectly righteous in His anger.
  - b. We are often convinced that we are experiencing "righteous indignation," but this verse seems to say that we are never really, perfectly free from sin in our anger.
    - i. **Matthew 5:21-22** "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER ' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' <sup>22</sup>"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

### **III. Sincere Growth in Active Repentance (James 1:21)**

#### **A. We must lay aside:**

1. Filthiness (ρυπαρίαν)
  - a. ILL: Dirty clothes and swamp-death sneakers!
2. Wickedness (κακίας)

**Quote: 2 Peter 2:1-3** Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, <sup>2</sup>like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, <sup>3</sup>if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

#### **B. We must receive:**

1. The "implanted word" [τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον]
  - a. What does this mean? There are 2 main options:
    - i. That the word "implanted" means that God built His word into every person.
      - a) If this is the case, it is referring to a universal conscience. See Romans 2.
    - ii. That the word "implanted" refers to something God does in us at conversion.
2. Why? What difference does it make?
  - a. It saves our souls.

**Point:** We are "Saved" in 3 senses: past, present and future. Explain this.

- We have been saved—Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:8-9
- We are being saved—Colossians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15
- We will be saved—Romans 5:9

### **IV. Sincere Growth in Active Obedience (James 1:22-25)**

**Point:** The Ballad of the Dancing Pastor or The saddest verses in the Bible (Ezekiel 33:30-33)

#### **A. Don't just hear...do!**

**ILL:** I don't know how to do much of anything. I have always been more of a "thinker" and a "feeler" than a doer. I get lost in the details pretty quick. Example: Once I asked my Dad to teach me how to change the oil in my car. My Dad was a doer! He was a hard worker! [Tell the story]

1. Otherwise you deceive yourself.
  - a. As I mentioned earlier, the pursuit of a Christianity without obedience is a great temptation...a stumbling block to sincere faith.
2. You will be blessed in what you do, if you do, and not just hear.

**B. Are you really going to leave the house that way?**

1. Bad Breath, Bedhead, and Boasting.

**Point:** I love it when the Bible illustrates itself! Look at this analogy! It is perfect. Do you just roll out of bed and leave the house?

**V. Sincere Growth Starts Now! (Conclusions)**

**Quote:** Unbelief, and a thousand evils, are still in our hearts; though their reign and dominion is at an end, they are not slain nor eradicated...We cannot absolutely conquer these evils, but it becomes us to be humbled for them; and we are to fight, and strive, and pray against them. John Newton

**A. What, in your life, needs to stop right now?**

1. You know what needs to stop...so, stop!
  - a. **Hebrews 12:4** You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

**B. What, in your life, needs to start right now?**

1. If you know what is right, do it.
  - a. **James 4:17** Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

**C. You cannot grow if you are not yet alive!**

1. This is true of plants.
2. This is true of people [physically].
3. This is true of people [spiritually].

**Invitation**