“How To Be Blessed By The Bible”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15 – February 3, 2013, SBC

 James 1:19-27

In America, . . . Bibles, . . . are everywhere. You can find them, in grocery stores, bookstores, motel rooms, everywhere. They're available, in all sizes, shapes, translations, versions, leather bound, or paperback.

Every year, . . . the Bible, out sells, . . . every other, major bestseller. Last year, there were 500 million Bibles, published in the world, . . . in 18,000 different languages. In America, we are glutted, with the Word of God, . . . on the airways, radio, TV, books, magazines. It's everywhere. Yet, millions of people, . . . still miss, . . . the blessing, . . . of the Bible.

Why? Because, . . it's not automatic. The Bible, is a book, of blessing. It promises, . . comfort, strength, hope, wisdom, joy, power, and purpose. But, just because, you have a Bible, doesn't mean, . . you're going to get, the benefit, from it. James, being his practical self, gives us **three steps**, on how to be blessed, by the Bible:

James 1:25, is the key verse, *"The man who looks intently, into the perfect law, that gives freedom, . . . and, continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed, in what he does."*

The Bible, is called the perfect law, . . . because, it's exactly, . . . what we need. It promises, freedom, . . . and, it promises, blessing. James gives us, . . . **three steps**:

**1. I MUST RECEIVE GOD'S WORD, . . . IF I'M GOING TO BE BLESSED BY IT**

James 1:21 – *"Accept the Word, planted in you."* Circle the word, "accept". This word in Greek, is a hospitality term, which literally means, . . . "to welcome" -- come on in. If we're going to be blessed, by the Word of God, . . . first, we must welcome the Word, . . . into our lives. We must, . . be receptive. James gives, an illustration. He says, it's planted, in you. He gives the illustration, . . . of a garden, and seed.

The Bible, all through Scripture, . . . compares itself, to seed. Jesus told the parable, . . . of the sower, and said, “The Word of God, is a seed, and it's planted, in our hearts.” How is it, you can take two seeds, that are exactly the same, and plant them, in two different locations, and get two different crops, in fruitfulness?

One soil, is prepared, . . . and, the other, is not. How is it, that you can take two people, . . . and, put them, . . . in the same worship service, with the same message, . . . and, one person gets blessed by it, and the other person says, he didn't get anything out of it. One heart was prepared, . . . and, one wasn't. James says, . . we must receive, . . . the Word of God, . . . with, the right attitude.

\*\*\*\* He gives us four attitudes, . . . you need, to be blessed, by God's word. They are, . . . hearing-aides.

1. Be careful. We must have, a careful attitude. v. 19 – *"Be quick, to listen, . . ."* Give it your, . . full attention. Be alert. Don't miss it. *". . . slow, to speak, . . ."* When I'm talking, I'm not listening. God gave us two ears, and one mouth, . . . so, we ought to listen, twice as much, as we talk. When we’re talking, we’re not listening.

Many of our problems, . . . are caused, because, we're quick, to speak, . . . rather than, being quick, . . . to listen. Be careful, . . . in your attitude. Be ready. Be intent. Be ready, . . . to receive, God's Word. Be careful.

2. Be calm. Be calm, if you're going to receive God's Word, . . . and, be blessed by it. v. 19b – *". . . and, slow, to become angry, . . ."* A relaxed attitude, . . . increases, receptivity. If you're relaxed, . . . people can, communicate with you, more. (We should work on, relaxing people, in our services, for that reason.)

We don't hear much, when we're angry, upset, bitter, resentful. Bitterness, is a barrier, an emotional block, that keeps us, . . . from hearing God's Word. Some may ask, "How come God, never speaks to me." Maybe, you've got, some resentment in your life, . . . you need to get rid of.

An article, . . . in Reader's Digest said, when you listen, . . . it actually lowers, your blood pressure. When you speak, . . . it raises, your blood pressure. James says, . . . be calm, be slow to anger.

What is your emotional state, normally, . . . when you come to church, on Sunday morning? Do you come, with a calm attitude? In many homes, on Sunday morning, . . . it's kind, of hectic. Then, we come, at the last minute, . . and, expect God, to speak to us. What preparation? You need, to be calm. Maybe, you need to get up, . . . a little bit earlier.

3. Be clean. v. 21 – *"Get rid, of all moral filth, and the evil, that is so prevalent, . . ."* Before, you can plant the seed, you need to do, a little weeding. The word "filth", that he says, you've got to get rid of, is actually the Greek word, that means, "earwax". When you have, a sin in your life, . . . it blocks, your hearing.

It prevents, God's Word, from getting, . . into your heart. He says, get rid of the evil, anything, . . that we know, that, isn't right, in our lives. God says, “Lay aside, all of the emotional garbage, the old habits, the junk in your life, . . . so, that God's Word, . . . can get through, to you.”

How can, we be clean? By confession. 1 John 1:9 – *"If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just, to forgive us, and cleanse us, from all unrighteousness."* (In James 1:21, The Living Bible says, *"Get rid, of all that's wrong, in your life, . . . both inside, and out.")*

4. Be compliant. (Not complaint!) Teachable, yielded, humble, . . . willing, to be changed. He says *"humbly accept, the Word of God, planted in you, . . ."* Don't act like, . . . you know, it all. If you know it all, . . God's Word, . . . can't get through, to you. Pray, . . . "God, what do You, need to do, . . . in my life."

God says, if you want to be blessed, . . first, you have to receive it, be receptive, . . with these four hearing aids. Reception, is not enough. James says, we not only need, to receive, the Word of God, . . . but, . . . . . . .

**2. REFLECT ON, . . . THE WORD OF GOD**

James 1:23 – *"Anyone, who listens to the Word, but, does not do, what it says, is like a man, who looks at his face in a mirror, and after looking at himself, immediately goes away, and immediately forgets, what he looks like."*

James uses, an illustration, here. God's Word, . . . is like a mirror. The purpose of a mirror, . . is to, evaluate us. We use them, . . to evaluate ourselves. We look in a mirror, to assess the damage, from the night before. Then, we do something about it. What good is a mirror, if we don't do anything, . . about, what we see? God says, a mirror reflects, what we're like, on the outside. God's Word reflects, what we're like, on the inside.

Have you ever, seen yourself, in the Bible? Hebrews says, *"God's Word, detects the thoughts, intents, motives and, desires of the heart."* Many years ago, Queen Elizabeth, who was beautiful, in her youth, . . . ordered, that all of the mirrors, be removed, from Buckingham Palace, . . because, she couldn't stand, to face, . . . that, she was growing old.

A lot of people, don't read the Bible, . . . because, they're afraid. They're unwilling, to face themselves, and see themselves, . . . as they really are. They don't want to look, . . . in the mirror, of God's Word.

\*\*\* James gives us, three practical ways, to reflect, on the Word of God:

1. Read it. v. 25 – *"The man, who looks intently, into the perfect law"*. He's actually, talking more, . . . about **research**, than he is reading. Investigating. The word "look", in Greek, means, "to stoop down, . . . and, gaze in". It's the word used, when Peter went to the tomb, on resurrection Sunday, . . . when he stooped down, and peeked in. He investigated. Focus your attention, . . . on the Word of God.

There are two ways, you can look, at a mirror. You can gaze at it, or you can glance at it. All of us, have done, both. It's human nature, that you can't, . . . walk by a mirror, . . . and, not, look at it. When you glance at it, you immediately walk away, . . . and, forget, what you've seen. It didn't do you, . . . any good.

Many people, try to have a quiet time, that way. They don't, want to gaze at it, . . . but, glance at it. Give God, . . . five minutes. God says that, He wants us, to gaze, . . . at the Word. Look at it, . . . intently, in detail.

Study it. That's how, you look intently, at the Word of God. Look at, . . . the details. James says, we need to receive, the Word of God, . . . and, then reflect on it, . . . first, by reading it, and second, by reviewing it.

 Pray, . . . God, how can I make this real, . . . in my life?

2. Review it. v. 25 – *". . . and, continues, to do so, . . ."* That means, over, and over, and over. The Bible calls this, meditation. When you think about something, over and over, . . . it’s meditation. Meditation is not, put your mind, in neutral, . . . and, contemplate the lint, . . . in your navel. Meditation means, . . to think seriously, about something, . . . over and over.

If you know, how to worry, you can meditate. Take a negative idea, and think about it, over and over, . . . .and, it's called, worry. Take God's Word, and think about it, over and over, . . . and, it's called meditation.

The Bible says, “Meditate, on God's Word”. Jesus said, in John 8:31, *". . . if you continue, in My Word, then, you're truly, My disciples."* Read it, . . . and, review it.

These outlines, . . . that we give you, with these sermons, . . . are not, so that, you can keep up with me, . . . it's so that, you can review it, during the week. God says, “You want to be blessed, . . . by the Word? Review it.”

Psalm 119:97 – *"I meditate on your Word, all day long."* Every businessman, ought to memorize, Joshua 1:8. If you'll do one thing, . . . God promises, to bless you, . . . with success. And, that promise is, . . . If you meditate, . . . on His word.

Read it, and review it, continually. Stay in it, and be faithful, to the book. Some people, are more faithful, . . . to Ann Landers, or the sports page, . . . than, they are, to God's Word.

How many of you, believe everything, you read, . . . in the newspaper, . . . or, watch on TV? Then, why do we spend more time reading, . . . or, watching something, . . . we don't believe, . . . than, something we do? We need to fill our minds, with the Word of God. James says, “You want to be blessed? Reflect, on the Word. Think about it, . . . by reading it, . . . and, reviewing it.”

3. Remembering it. v. 25 *". . . not forgetting, what he has heard."* Nothing will do more, for your spiritual life, than, developing the habit, . . of memorizing Scripture. Nothing will benefit, your personal spiritual life, more than, developing the habit, . . . of memorizing Scripture.

Psalm 119:11 – *"Thy Word, have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin, against Thee."* Memorize God's Word, . . . if, you want to be, blessed by it. We remember, what's important, . . . to us.

Take notes, write things down. If you value God's Word, you're going to, take notes on it. Hebrews 2:1 – *"Write things down, so we don't let slip, . . . what we've heard."*

The United States Air Force, did a study, . . . and, found, that we forget 95%, of what we hear, within 72 hours. This statistic, depresses most pastors. We spend all week, preparing a message, . . . to give, on Sunday. By Wednesday, you've forgotten 95%, of what we've said, . . . unless, you've written it down.

James says, “Receive God's Word, with the right attitude, . . . reflect, on God's Word, by reading it, . . reviewing it, remembering it.” But, even that's, . . . not enough.

**3. I MUST, RESPOND TO, . . . THE WORD OF GOD**

I must, do something, . . . about it, act on it, live it, practice it. v. 22 – *"Do not merely listen, to what the Word says, and so deceive yourselves. Do,. . . what it says."* Practice. What good is a mirror, . . . if you look at it, . . . and, don't do anything, about it?

The word "listen", in Greek, is the word, for "auditor". If you audited a class, in college, you didn't take it, for credit, no tests, no responsibility, no research. You were totally, relaxed. You just listened, . . . you didn't have any intention, . . . of applying it.

We have a lot of auditors, . . . in the church. They come to church, walk in, hear the Word of God, walk out, . . . with no intention, . . . of ever, being changed. Some people, . . . do this, for years. They take notes, . . . write things down, . . . but, it never changes them. We must respond, to God's Word, let it change us, . . if we're going to be, blessed by it.

James says, it's self-deception, when we don't, let it change us. We think that, just gaining content, is making . . us, spiritually mature. The test of maturity, . . . is not, knowledge. The test of maturity, . . . is character. A lot of people, have great Bible knowledge, . . and, they are **spiritual midgets**. We need, to practice it, apply it, . . . put it, in our life.

And, knowledge, . . . increases responsibility. The more we know, . . . the more, we're accountable for. What are we doing, . . . about what we know? Jesus said, *"To whom much is given, . . . much is required."* And, James said, *"To him who knows to do good, and doesn't do it, . . . it's sin."*

Illustration: Let's say you folks as a church, decide to get concerned, about your pastor's health. You come to me and say, “Pastor, as you move into older years, we don't want you to have a flabby body, or furniture problems -- where your chest, drops into your drawers – so, you take up an offering, and buy me as a gift, . . . Arnold Schwartzeneger's Bodybuilding Book.”

You say, “This book, . . . can change, your life. It's fantastic. It has changed the lives, . . . of millions of people. It will, keep you strong. It will be a blessing, to you. Read this book. It will, . . . change you.”

I say, "Great", I go away for 6 months, and then come back, and, I'm the same guy. You say, "What happened? Didn't you, read the book?" What if I said to you, "I read, the book. I enjoyed it. This is, the greatest book, I've ever read. I loved it. I even underlined portions of it, with colored markers, and memorized sections of it, . . . and, even started a group study of the book. Every night, . . . I would spend, a couple hours, . . . studying it." But, I was still lazy, and overweight. I hadn’t changed, . . . a bit.

How often, do we do that, with the Word of God? We give awards, for memorizing Scripture, . . . but, we don't give awards, . . for **DOING** Scripture. We get a plaque, that says "I read, through the Bible", . . . but, don't get one, that says, "I did, . . the Bible." We need to mark our Bibles, but, we need to, let the Bible, mark us.

It's not, how many times, you've been through, the Word of God, . . it's how many times, it's been, through you. You've got to be, . . . a doer, of the Word. We deceive ourselves, in thinking, . . . that, because we have knowledge, . . . that, makes us mature. Having knowledge, of a bodybuilding book, . . . doesn't, produce muscles. Just because, we know something, . . . doesn't mean, we act on it.

\* There was an article, in a newspaper. They did a poll, of Christians, in America. "Many in America, believe, . . . but, don't practice." We live in a hotbed, . . of Bible teaching. Some of the top Bible teachers, of the nation, are on TV, on the internet. You can turn on the radio, at any time of day, . . and, hear godly men, teaching the Word. We are in a gospel glut, in America. You can hear the Word of God, . . . 24 hours a day. A lot of us, are lulled into the fact, that, because we're hearing a lot about God, . . we are maturing. Many believe, . . . but, don't practice. James would say, "They are hearers, . . . but, not doers."

Newspaper: "From scores, of churches, American residents appear average, or even devout, . . in their religious beliefs, . . . but, when it comes to practicing, those beliefs, a Register poll reveals, that most residents, are more inclined, to worship the golden calf, . . . than, the Lamb of God." It goes on, and talks about, hearers, not doers.

That is what, James is attacking. He's saying, “If you want to be blessed, you've got to live, the Word of God, . . . not, just hear it. Not just, . . . know it.”

We really work at, . . . making the Bible, simple. There is a lot in the Bible, . . . that is difficult, to understand, complex, deep. Yet, we try to present it, in such a way, that's very clear, and very easy to understand, and, easy to put into practice. When you go out of here, . . I want you to be able, to do the Word, not, just hear the Word of God. We work at, making it practical. We try to make it simple, so we can put it, into practice.

STORY: Have you heard, about the guy, . . . who came, to church, late. He walked in, just as the service, was completing. He said, to an usher, . . . "Is the sermon done, yet?" The usher was wise, and said, "The sermon has been preached, . . . but, it is yet, to be done."

Be ye doers, of the Word, . . . don't, merely listen. Put it, into practice. My honest prayer, on Monday morning, is that you will remember what I said, . . . and, put it into practice. I pray, that this church, will develop the reputation, that people say, . . . "They're doers, of the Word. They practice, what everybody else, . . . just, talks about. They live it." You ought to be, . . . a Living Bible. The best translation of Scripture, is when you translate it, . . . into your life, and let it, change you.

What pleases me, even more than a comment, or compliment, . . . is when somebody says, they will put it, into practice, and use it. They say, they will do, the sermon, this week. “Let's not, deceive ourselves,” James says.

 v. 25 (Phillips) – *"The man who puts the law, into practice, . . . wins true happiness."*

Jesus, in Matthew 7, tells the story, of the wise, and the foolish builder. He says, the foolish builder, builds on sand. He is like the guy, who hears the Word of God, . . . but, doesn't do what it says. The wise man, is the one who hears it, . . and then goes out and makes an honest attempt, to put it into his life. Practice it.

Jesus said, in John 13:17 – *"Now, that you know these things, you will be blessed, if you do them."* The simplest definition of maturity, . . . is to be a doer, of the Word. That's what it means, . . . to be mature. You do, what the Bible says. We must not, only read the word, . . . we must heed, the Word.

\*\* Every single one of us, knows more spiritual truth, . . . than we're putting into practice, right now. You don't need, . . . to know more, . . . you already know, enough. It's not, the matter, that we need, to know more. We just, need, to put into practice, . . . what we already know. We just need to practice, what we already know to do, . . not learn, anything new. Be a doer, . . of the Word. Experience God, not just know Him.

\*\*\*\* James concludes, this section, with three examples, of practicing, the Word. He covers each of these, in the rest of the book, . . . so, we will get back to them, . . . in these, next few weeks.

In v. 26 he says, “One of the ways, you can know, that you are a doer of the Word, is you have, a controlled mouth.” *"If any one considers himself religious, and does not keep a tight reign on his tongue, . . . he deceives himself, and his religion, is worthless."*  One of the ways, you can know, if you are a doer of the Word, . . . is you have self-control, . . . over, your words.

A caring, heart. *"Religion, that our God and Father accepts, as faultless, is this. To look after orphans, and widows, in their distress."* We help, . . . the helpless. Social concern, . . . a caring heart. A clean, mind. *"To keep oneself, from being polluted, by the world."* Spiritual, integrity. That is genuine, Christianity.

What is James, . . . saying to us? He's saying, "What are you, going to do, . . . about, what you already know?" What are you, going to do about it, today? Maybe, some of you, need to decide, to start preparing better, . . . for worship. Get up a little earlier, . . . so, you're not so rushed.

We can sit here, for the whole service, . . . we tune in to God, and get calm and collected, and we’re quiet, and ready. We can say, "Lord, here I am. Teach me, so I can be blessed, by God's word." Maybe, some of you need to say, "I'm going to read, through the Bible, this year." About five chapters a day, and you'll go through the Bible, in a year. "I'm going to start memorizing, Scripture. I'll pick a verse a week, and hide God's Word, . . . in my heart."

It's a condition, for answered prayer. John 15:7 – *"If you abide* *in Me, and My Word abides in you, you can ask whatever you will, and it will be done for you."* The Word of God, in your heart, . . . is a condition, for answered prayer.

"We need to find, a place of ministry, where we can get involved." That article, in the newspaper said, that all these people believe, . . . but, less than one-third, ever devote any time, for ministry. Impression, . . . without expression, leads to depression. If you're always taking in, one study after another, and never get out in ministry, . . . it's going to dry up, your spiritual life. James is saying, that the blessing, of the Bible, . . . comes, when we start living it.

Lord, You have not, beat around the bush, this morning. We can't ignore, what Your Word says. You've told us, to be doers of the Word, . . . to practice, what we already know.

“How To Be Blessed By The Bible”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15

James 1:19-27

*"The man who looks intently into the Perfect Law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it -- he will be blessed in what he does."* (vs. 25)

1. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ GOD'S WORD. (vs. 19-21)

*"... accept the Word planted in you ..."* (vs. 21)

Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23, 1 Peter 1:23

ATTITUDES FOR "GOOD RECEPTION"

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 19a)

*"Be quick to listen, slow to speak..."*

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs.19b)

*" ... and slow to become angry ... "*

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 21a)

*"Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent ..."*

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 21b)

*"humbly accept the Word planted in you ..."*

2. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ON GOD'S WORD (vs. 22-25)

Illustration: God's Word is like a mirror

 2 Cor. 3:18, 2 Tim. 2:7

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"... the man who looks intently into the perfect law..."*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"... and continues to do so ..."*

 John 8:31-3, Ps. 119:97, Joshua 1:8

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"... not forgetting what he has heard ..."*

 John 15:7, Hebrews 2:1, Psalm 119:11

3. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ TO GOD'S WORD (vs. 22-27)

*"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. DO WHAT IT SAYS!"* (vs. 22)

*"The man who put the Law into practice wins true happiness."* (vs. 25)

Matthew 7:24-27, John 13:17

3 Examples (vs.26-27)