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SOME STRICT RULES FOR EFFECTIVE WORSHIP

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 10
JAMES 1:19-21

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JAMES 1:19-21 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

We are going to study some verses that deal with our conduct when we are in assembly worship. How should we act when the Word of God is being taught by the pastor-teacher? What is to be our mental attitude and how can we best assimilate and absorb Scriptural truth when it is presented? James gives us some very practical rules which we must strictly follow if we are to learn Bible doctrine.

JAMES 1:19 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:" The word translated "wherefore" is the word "Oida" and it is a perfect, active, imperative and should be translated "I command you to know this doctrine." The command is that we take in doctrine daily. We are to erect the edification complex in the soul. In other words this first command says--"Keep on coming. Keep on opening your Bible. Keep on listening. Keep on taking notes. In this way you will keep on learning." So James says, "Know this doctrine, my beloved brethren."

Can't Do This On Your Own

Now it is quite evident that you can't do this on your own. You can sit down and read the Bible until you are blue in the face and you can't learn it that way. You have to be taught, line upon line and doctrine upon doctrine. This can only be accomplished in assembly worship.

The Real Purpose of Church Attendance.

You don't come to church primarily for the result of "Boy meets girl," or "To meet business friends" or "To please your father or mother" or "To appear respectable in the community." You come to church primarily to learn and to know Bible truth. You come to church so you can be indoctrinated.

James is going to hit some very strong blows here, so it is rather nice that he starts out by saying, "My beloved brethren." We found from the beginning of this book that this message was written to Jews scattered all over the world. But many Jews had gotten the idea right after conversion that they knew it all. James is trying to wake them up and get them to realize they need to learn doctrine. He calls them "beloved" not because they were worthy of God's love, but because they were beloved because of the character of God. God was free to love them with maximum love because they had believed in him and he could love them with a maximum love without violating his character. This passage deals with how to return God's love.

This verse says, "Let every man" and the word for every is "pas" and it means every single one. He uses the word "man" but it refers to both men and women. Every believer is to "be" something and the word is the present, active, imperative of "eimi," so it means "keep on being." So the Christian life according to James isn't running out doing certain things, but it is being something.

Swift To Hear

So the first thing a Christian is to be is "swift to hear." The word translated swift is an adjective from "tachus" and it means quick, speedy. "To hear" is a prepositional phrase that has an infinitive as the object and it means "swift for the purpose of hearing." The word for hearing is "akouo" and it is an aorist, active, infinitive. No one ever learned without listening.

GET EIGHT POINTS ON "SWIFT TO HEAR"

1. THE MECHANICS FOR LEARNING.
Here we have a perfect, active, imperative followed by a present, active imperative. The first is a command to live the Christian life and the second command is how to do it. And this is commanded to every believer. THE MECHANICS IS CONCENTRATION. Swift for the purpose of learning means learn how to concentrate. It means at the point of time when the pastor-teacher stands up to teach, you are to be swift to concentrate. It is necessary that we learn how to do this.
2. DO THIS CONSTANTLY.
The believer is here commanded to concentrate every time the Bible is taught.
3. DON'T BE DISTRACTED.
You are not to let the personality of the teacher deter you from hearing and listening. (Now the pastor-teacher must concentrate in studying, then you must concentrate in listening.)
4. DIVINE HELP IN CONCENTRATION.
Concentration requires more than human ability. It requires grace provision from God, and God does this for you by the filling of the Holy Spirit.
5. CONCENTRATE ON THE MESSAGE RATHER THAN ON THE MESSENGER.
In a very real sense it is necessary to forget the messenger and concentrate on the message. (From the description we have of Paul he was probably small, short, bald-headed, had a squeaky voice, and weak eyes. Most pulpit committees would have passed him by rather quickly.)
Remember this--it's the message that counts and not the messenger.
6. ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN GIVE THIS HELP.
God the Holy Spirit can provide you with the poise and the good manners to listen and concentrate when the Bible is being taught.
7. THE ENEMIES OF CONCENTRATION.
You cannot concentrate on what is being taught if you are talking or if you are day dreaming or if you are looking around. (That's why we have nurseries to keep the little ones. They can't concentrate on what is being said and they won't let anyone around them concentrate on the message.)
8. THIS INVOLVES AUTHORITY.
In order to learn, the student must recognize the authority of the pastor-teacher to teach.

We now come to the second admonition given in this verse concerning the right way to worship and learn. The phrase is "slow to speak." The word slow is "bradus" and it refers to silence both in the soul and in the mouth while doctrinal teaching is being done. That's why we have that phrase "Let the women keep silent in the church" and it is exactly the same kind of a command that we have here. The principle applies to men as well as to women. You can't talk and learn at the same time. (You can't write notes to someone in the room and pass them back and forth and learn anything at the same time.)

1 CORINTHIANS 14:40 "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Those in the audience who talk when Bible teaching is being given are not only rude and impolite, but they also lack the power of concentration. Rudeness is tantamount to the rejection of authority. Some don't talk during teaching, but they let their minds wander and they daydream and the teaching of the Word of God goes right by them and they never catch the message God has for them.

The third phrase is "Slow to wrath" and this moves us into the mental attitude realm. The word for wrath here is a noun and the word is "orge." It means mental emotional anger. It means you react to what is being taught rather than respond to it. The believer cannot learn doctrine when he is upset mentally and when he allows mental attitude sins to be in his mind.

So we have three hindrances mentioned thus far--

1. Lack of concentration. (This is the volitional aspect)
2. Lack of control of the tongue while teaching is being given.
3. Lack of the control of our mental attitude.

So the correct translation of this verse is as follows--

"Know this, my beloved brethren, Everyone keep on being swift for the purpose of hearing, slow for the purpose of talking, and slow with reference to mental anger."

JAMES 1:20 "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. This verse is now going to analyze the third principle we have just studied. All three of these verses we are studying here have to do with our conduct and response in assembly worship when the pastor-teacher is giving the Word. This verse says if you have any mental attitude sins, you can't learn. The word for man here is "aner" and it refers to both male and female. The word here for worketh is "ergazomai" and it means something on the inside working out. The word for righteousness is "dikaiosune" and refers to fair dealing that produces divine good.

So this verse correctly translated says:

"For the anger of the nobleman believer does not produce divine good from the source of God."

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GOOD

1. SOURCES OF DIVINE GOOD.

There are three sources of divine good.

- a. The filling of the Holy Spirit.
- b. The exhale of doctrine from your human spirit.
- c. The production of the edification complex.

2. ULTIMATE DEFEAT OF THE DEVIL AND FALLEN ANGELS.
The only thing that will ultimately defeat the Devil and all demons is divine good. Divine good will therefore be the thing that resolves the angelic conflict.
3. GOD PROVIDES THE RESOURCES.
God provides all the resources so we can produce divine good. This provision we call "The grace of God."
Colossians 1:9-10, 2 Timothy 2:21, 2 Timothy 3:17
4. EVERY BELIEVER CAN PRODUCE DIVINE GOOD.
God so designed life for the believer that it is possible for him to produce divine good. It is not an impossible task.
Ephesians 2:10
5. THE SIGN OF STABILITY.
Production of divine good is one of the signs of stability and poise in the Christian life. 2 Thessalonians 2:17
6. TO BE REWARDED.
Divine good is the only good God will accept and reward.
2 Cor. 5:10

Since human good is the opposite of divine good, look for a moment at the doctrine of human good.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN GOOD

1. ALL HUMAN GOOD IS DEAD WORKS. Hebrews 6:1
2. HUMAN GOOD WILL NOT SAVE MANKIND. Isaiah 64:6, Romans 8:8
3. HUMAN GOOD IS NEVER ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. Titus 3:5, Eph. 2:8-9
4. HUMAN GOOD IS CONDEMNED BY GOD. 1 Cor. 3:11-16
5. HUMAN GOOD IS THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT.
 - a. In the unbeliever at the great white judgment throne.
Rev. 20:11-15
 - b. In the believer at the judgment seat of Christ. 1 Cor. 3:11-16.
6. HUMAN GOOD IS THE PRODUCT OF THE OLD SIN NATURE. Is. 64:6a.
7. HUMAN GOOD IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PLAN OF GOD. Psalm 18:2

While human good is not categorized as sin, it is just as unacceptable to God as sin. Human good is different from sin in that it does not involve a moral issue. Giving money to a local church would not be classified as a sin, but if the person giving it were unsaved, it would be human good. If it were a believer out of fellowship, it would be human good.

A distinction should be made between human good and morality. Morality does not save, however morality is a by-product of Christianity. Morality is essential for the orderly function of the human race under the four divine institutions (volition, marriage, the family, and the nation.)

JAMES 1:21 "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." We now will see the mechanics of grace and how grace operates in a human life. The words "lay apart" come from "apotithemi" and is an aorist, active, imperative. This is a command to rebound and get back in fellowship after you have sinned.

The word for filthiness is "ruparia" and it refers to mental attitude filthiness which you may bring into a worship service with you in your mind.

The word for superfluity is "perisseuo" and it means the overflow. The word for wickedness is "kakia" and it refers to the principle of wickedness. So here we have the figure of mental wickedness down in your mind overflowing into your thinking while you are in a worship service trying to listen to the Word of God.

He goes on to say "receive with meekness" and the word for receive is "decomai" and it is an aorist, middle, imperative. This is a lover's word and refers to an intimate embrace. In other words, you are to embrace truth with an intimate embrace just like you would embrace someone you love dearly. He says we are to do this "in the sphere of meekness" and the word for meekness is "prautes." This means that you are to recognize the authority of the teacher and take the truth into your mind with love.

The engrafted word means you take the word into your mind and plant it there and then it grows and produces fruit.

Then he says "this engrafted word" is able, and the word for able is present, active, participle of "dunamai." It means the Word of God always does have the power to deliver you. The word for deliver is the aorist, active, infinitive of "sozo" and it means a soul deliverance, a mental deliverance.

So this verse should read, "Wherefore, having removed all pollution, and the overflow of wickedness, receive and retain in the sphere of meekness the word that produces fruit, which is always able to deliver your soul from reversionism and revolt."