

## **Obedience to the Word is the mark of genuine Christianity**

(James 1:19-27)

### **Introduction**

Beloved brothers and sister scattered in your homes allover Johannesburg, greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I don't know how many times you have heard news about the Covid-19 in the last 24 hours. For me it is uncountable times. The question is not what we hear. It is more of what we do about all the news that we hear. Our response to news about cCovid-19 can either be crippling panic or extreme caution. Today's devotional comes from James 1:19-27, I have entitled it, "**Obedience to The Word is the mark of genuine Christianity**" At the heart of our teaching from James today is how the Word of God we hear shapes our lives.

Given the crisis of the threat of coronavirus are you going to listen to news about this diseases and be shaped by it or be shaped by what God's word says. May I draw your attention to listening and acting on the word of God you hear today so it can shape your life.

### ***Hearing God's word (19-20)***

Verse 19 flows directly from verse 18. Verse 18 says as Christians we have been given new birth through the word of God. The text we are looking at today helps James' audience to understand how to move from new birth to new life. To grow in their new life and live it out in a situation of crisis they require to hear the word of God. Hearing this word comes with intentional listening. Listening effectively happens in an attitude free from uncontrolled anger and uncontrolled speech. Both anger and too much talking do not produce behaviour that is pleasing to God. Anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires (v20).

### **Accepting God's word (21)**

James challenges his listeners. He says merely hearing God's word is not enough. Reading and memorizing God's word is half the job. They need to accept God's word and agree with it as a powerful and life-giving word. James says that accepting God's word involves first getting rid of moral filth and all forms of evil behaviour. He is actually using the picture of "putting off" wickedness like someone putting off dirty smelly clothing and putting on new ones. Or like a farmer who first clears a piece of land before sowing new seeds. It is through the power of the word implanted in their heart that they can be saved from filthiness and wickedness.

### **Doing God's word (22-27)**

New life in Christ does not come from just hearing the word of God. It comes from accepting it and acting on it. James develops his point by examining two different responses to hearing God's word.

The foolish deceive themselves by merely listening to it and not acting on it (v22). How many times have you heard someone coming to church saying, "*Heyi namhlanje the word was powerful*" and it ends there. The power in the word they heard does not translate into action that changes their lives. James contrasts the foolish listener with the wise listener who is set free by the word and is blessed (v 25). James uses an interesting picture of someone who looks at their face in the mirror and forgets what they look like. It is like the mirror shows them all the spots that need to be cleaned up, but instead of cleaning up the spots they ignore them. Such a person will be fooling themselves to believe that they can compete in a beauty contest after putting aside all that their beauty therapist has suggested to them.

The wise person acts on what he sees in the mirror. The mirror reflects to him exactly what they are. So does God's word. It reveals to us how badly damaged we are – our evil desires, thoughts and emotions. It doesn't stop there. It offers us the power to change. Obedience means agreeing with what God says and humbly obeying what he says we must do. This is the mark of genuine Christianity. James is saying because God's law is perfect, it is exactly what they need to fix their messed up lives. So we are. We need to act on the word we hear so we can experience freedom and blessings. God's word that we hear which is powerful to change our lives if we act on it.

James ends this section by pointing them to three practical ways of a life of obedience to God's word (v26 &27). James says in living out obedience to God's word;

1. Mind your tongue – guard your tongue – control your tongue
2. Do care and concerned for the helpless and needy eg widows and orphans.
3. Abstain from the corruption of this world – stand out, be distinct as a child of God.

### **Conclusion**

James seeks to motivate Christians going through trials to develop a mature and consistent faith. He calls them to exhibit Christian character in the midst of trials. He is also encouraging us that those who have received new life in Christ should express it in a lifestyle of obedience to God. He calls us to recognize the power of God's word in moving us from immorality and evil behaviour to living lives that please God by doing what God says.