

The Work of the Word
James 1:21-22

January 13, 2013

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C. The Work of the Word

1. Text: ²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.'

2. Deluding Ourselves^D

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2. What Is Your Life Purpose?^G

^A Matthew 5:48

^B Ephesians 5:25-27

^C Colossians 1:22, Titus 2:11-14, 2 Peter 3:14

^D 2 Timothy 3:16-17

^E Ephesians 1:4, Acts 3:19, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Romans 8:29-30

^F Psalm 119:9, 11, 105; Joshua 1:8, 1 John 1:6, 8-9; Hebrews 12:14

^G Philippians 3:10, Romans 8:29

A. What is Your Life Objective?

1. The Objectives of a Church

- a. in the business community it was the practice for a while to produce, from the bottom up, statements of Vision, Mission, Strategies, and Goals – that is, to involve employees of all levels in the discussion and the definition of these for a particular company
- b. the idea was that by this means every employee would ‘buy in’ to what was developed and work with ‘the team’ to bring it about
- c. churches and denominations have often adopted the same approach to come up with an action plan by which they hope to achieve growth in numbers or impact on their community
- d. in business it was discovered that frequently this approach resulted in the wrong goals – policy was set by the most fluent, not the wisest – so it was discovered that Vision and Mission had to be set at the top
- e. in my own industry, insurance, many companies came to decide that their primary business was marketing, not giving protection – and it was only after \$billions in legal and legislative costs that it changed
- f. so if a church or denomination seeks to establish these things based on other than God’s revealed will for his church, it will be all in vain

2. Individuals Also Have Objectives

- a. some of these are secular: daily they are expressed by neighbours, friends, fellow employees, and perhaps even yourself
 - (A) to earn a better salary
 - (B) to get to the top for its power and prestige
 - (C) to have a beautiful house, drive a beautiful car
 - (D) to retire early; to travel; and so on
- b. some of them may even be spiritual, or have a spiritual basis
 - (A) to be a good wife or husband.
 - (B) to be a good parent.
 - (C) to provide for my family
 - (D) to serve in the church
 - (E) even to lead others to Jesus Christ
- c. all of these can, under the right circumstances, be admirable goals, but they are not the answer to the question

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B. What Is God's Priority Purpose?

1. Jesus Spoke Plainly

- a. in describing the requirements of the kingdom of God to His followers
- b. he didn't understate them that they might be more attractive
- c. nor in any sense take away a person's responsibility in meeting them
- d. the sermon on the mount leaves no doubt, no flexibility
- e. 'Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' (Matthew 5:48) – there's not much wiggle-room there!
- f. Jesus' words were not limited to the Jews when they were under the Law, for listen to the stated ...

2. Purpose for Christ's Church

- a. '... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.' (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- b. Christ died on the cross to sanctify the church: to make her glorious; cleansed; spotless; wrinkle-less; holy; blameless
- c. that was the prime purpose of God in Christ for the church universal; that should be viewed as the prime purpose for the local church
- d. think upon that; how can such spotlessness be achieved?
- e. the church of Christ does not consist of bricks and mortar; nor of documents and charters; not even of membership lists and offices; but of individual Christians regenerated by God's Holy Spirit
- f. so the purpose for Christ's church must be the

3. Purpose for Each Christian

- a. 'yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to (that is a statement of purpose: in order to) present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—' (Colossians 1:22); or,
- b. Titus 2:11-14, 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.' – this verse shows that we as individuals have a responsibility in this matter; so also in

- c. 2 Peter 3:14 'Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.'
- d. be diligent: make every effort; be zealous; be eager
- e. how many of us have this as our life objective? – being holy, spotless, blameless, cleansed? – if I do not, then my goals are too low
- f. but how can this ever be accomplished? ... the answer: it is ...

C. The Work of the Word

1. Our Text this morning is: '²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.'

2. Deluding Ourselves

- a. we shall return to verse 22, Lord willing, next Sunday morning as we bring a message on verses 22 to 25, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall'
- b. but for today, it is appropriate, that we spend a few moments on this phrase, 'deceiving your own selves' (AV)
- c. the verb, 'deceiving or deluding,' is constructed of two parts:
 - (A) a verb meaning 'to reckon or to account'
 - (B) and a prefix, meaning 'beside or alongside'
 - (C) and the combination was a word that was used in connection with keeping financial accounts, a reckoning alongside the true one – we might use the expression, 'to keep a second set of books'
 - (D) this was the word that Greek auditors, if there were such a thing, would use of someone who defrauded or cheated another
- d. without getting into the form of the word 'to reckon'^{—{2}}, note that it gives a special emphasis to the phrase 'your own selves'; we might paraphrase this by saying, 'if you do this, you're only fooling yourself' – you are the only one being defrauded or cheated
- e. what is it that causes us to cheat ourselves? ... in a nut shell this – that we have a wrong view about the word of God
 - (A) that we disregard the fact that it applies to our lives
 - (B) that we ignore its instruction
 - (C) that either by sophisticated arguments, or by simple unbelief, or by poor Scriptural interpretation; by one way or another we cause ourselves to think, 'well, this does not apply to me.' But it does

- f. we memorise these words, but let us also take to heart their meaning – ‘All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.’ (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

3. The Implanted Word

- a. this, we are told, is the word that is able to save our souls
- (A) in a verse 18, this was the word of truth, by which God has brought us forth, given us birth, the new birth as Christians
 - (B) in that verse it was the aspect of the word of God as the gospel, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ
 - (C) now the emphasis is on the word of God as instruction – but it is not a different word, it is still the power of God unto salvation
- b. there is a tendency, particularly among evangelicals, to constrain that word, salvation, or the idea of being saved, to that one point in our life when we came to saving faith in Christ
- c. but the word itself, has a much larger application, encompassing the entire history of our redemption by God, the healing of our soul
- (A) Salvation is: ‘just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. ...’ (Ephesians 1:4) ... salvation is election
 - (B) Salvation is: ‘Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;’ (Acts 3:19) ... salvation is conversion
 - (C) Salvation is: ‘Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.’ (1 Corinthians 6:11) ... salvation is sanctification
 - (D) Salvation is: ‘For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.’ (Romans 8:29-30) ... salvation is glorification, an act already complete in eternity
- d. this is the work of the word in salvation: to enable our taking off, like a dirty, befouled suit of clothing, our old nature – with all of its old, worldly values and the old, worldly desires – so as to be cleansed

4. How Will the Word Cleanse?

- a. it first needs to enter our minds

- (A) this is what will take place when we open our minds – accept or receive in humility – the word of God as is placed there by that self-same Holy Spirit who effected our regeneration
- (B) Psalm 119 has much to say about the preventive medicine for our souls that God’s word provides
 - (1) ‘How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word.’ (Psalms 119:9)
 - (2) “Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.” (Psalms 119:11 NAS95)
 - (3) ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.’ (Psalms 119:105)
- b. and then it needs to be pondered upon, thought about
 - (A) Joshua, for good reason somewhat timid, was given this charge
 - (B) ‘This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.’ (Joshua 1:8)
- c. it makes us sensitive to sin
 - (A) if we read and apply the word of God, then we shall be less likely to dismiss sin as some mere foible or mistake
 - (B) John warns Christians, ‘If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;’ then continues: ‘⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving *(a different word: leading astray)* ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ (1 John 1:6, 8-9)
 - (C) the work of the word is to bring us back into fellowship with God
- d. ‘Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.’ (Hebrews 12:14)

D. Conclusion

1. What Is the Purpose of a Cellular Telephone?

- a. ‘why,’ you say, ‘of course, it is to make a telephone calls.’
- b. now that is pretty self-evident
- c. but looking at all the variations that are available, you might wonder
- d. they come in a wide range of prices from free (but really they are not) to many hundreds of dollars
- e. some are extremely simple, but most have such a wealth of features that it seems to require a text-book in order to use them
- f. all these things are well and good, but even if you were to have the most expensive model, with every feature you could think of – a very computer in the palm of your hand – and you are trying to call somebody in an emergency; and it fails; it is useless – all the bells and whistles do not matter at all

2. What Is Your Life Purpose?

- a. when you accept Christ as Saviour, you are given responsibilities
 - (A) taking care of your family
 - (B) training your children to know the Lord
 - (C) meeting together with other believers
 - (D) encouraging one another
- b. all these are well and good; but when Christ returns, if you have missed God's primary purpose for your life, they will mean very little
- c. Paul never lost sight of that primary goal given by God: in Philippians chapter 3 he recounts all the things that he had once believed to be spiritually important, which he now considered but garbage in view of that surpassing purpose: *'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death'* (Philippians 3:10)
- d. we are not speaking here of a goal of sinless perfection – Scripture shows that to be impossible while we walk this earth – rather, the cleansing and re-cleansing John advocates to restore fellowship
- e. that goal is Christ-likeness, stated even more clearly in Romans 8:29, that Christians are *'... predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, ...'* ... James would have us make that same goal our own; all the rest are bells and whistles, and, if they matter, they will follow.

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Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in *(braces)*. Version identifiers are:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
- EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
- Lange – Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
- NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament, *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
- TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
- Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. This (παραλογίζομαι) is a deponent verb in the middle voice (existing also in the passive voice); such verbs frequently have a reflexive or self-contained action involved, that the subject of the action is both the actor and the one acted upon; hence the addition of ‘oneself’ (ἑαυτός) is emphatic in context. Buttman (§113 and Appendix F.III) is one source of more information on this subject.