

# Obey God's Word Diligently

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] James chapter 1, reading from verses 19 to 27.! That's James chapter 1, verses 19 to 27.
- ! And it's focused on hearing and doing the word. Hearing and doing, starting at 19. Know this, my beloved brothers.
- Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.
- Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.
- But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.
- [ 1 : 1 4 ] For he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.
- If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.
- Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this. To visit the orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- Amen. Thank you very much, Faye. Well, as you've heard this past Friday, we concluded our week of corporate consecration, during which time we sought the Lord in fasting and prayer, asking him for guidance and direction to lead us into this new year.
- And whenever we draw near to the Lord, one of the things that happens to us is we desire more and more to be the people of God. The people that God has called us to be.
- [ 2 : 4 5 ] The people we know that we are supposed to be. We grow in our desire to want to serve him and please him. We grow in our desire to be more sensitive to sin.
- In fact, we are more sensitive to sin. We just long to be more like Jesus. We want to love what he loves. We want to hate what he hates.
- And so this morning, I think the question that is before us is how can we do this in an ongoing way?
- How can we live lives in an ongoing way that please the Lord, that are consecrated to the Lord? How can we do that?
- I believe that the answer is in the title of this morning's sermon, and it is simply obey God's word diligently. That is how we can live consecrated lives in an ongoing way before the Lord.
- [ 3 : 5 2 ] This week of consecration was not just something that we go through and then we leave it behind us and we go back to our normal lives. But it is really to help us to live that way in an ongoing way.
- And I believe that the way that we do that is by diligently obeying the word of God. And that's what this scripture passage before us calls us to.

It calls us to diligently obey God's word. And I want to consider that this morning in our remaining time. First, let's take a moment to pray.

Heavenly Father, we pause in this moment to look to you. And Lord, we did it in song and we now do it in prayer.

And we say we need you. Lord, we need you to enable us to obey your word diligently so that we might live lives that are truly consecrated to you.

[ 4 : 59 ] And so would you come now by your spirit? Would you speak to all of our hearts? And would you help us, Lord? Would you help us to do this? Lord, this is what you have called us to as your people.

And we ask that you would, from your word, speak to our hearts to show us how this is indeed possible. And so we ask this now in Jesus' name.

Amen. The letter of James is really an encouraging letter. But the encouragement comes in the form of correction.

One of the main areas that James brings correction is he brings correction in the area of anger.

We see that pretty much through the letter. It is the largest area that James covers in this letter. He addresses angry speech.

[ 6 : 02 ] And he addresses angry conduct. And his goal for bringing this to the attention of God's people is that they do not live the way the world lives.

Angry speech and angry conduct should not mark the people of God. And so what James is doing is James is bringing to the attention of God's people, to the people in his day, and certainly by extension to us today, this correction.

And calling us away from living the way the world lives to the way that God would have us to live.

And in short, what James is doing is James is encouraging God's people to demonstrate true religion.

He's calling them to demonstrate the religion that they claim to possess in a very real and evident way.

[ 7 : 05 ] He's calling them to demonstrate true religion that gives evidence to the fact that they belong to God. And what James says in a nutshell in this passage can be summarized in this way.

Those who humbly hear and diligently obey God's word will faithfully demonstrate true religion. And in our remaining time this morning, I want us to consider what James says under three headings.

And I'll give them to you right up front of you taking notes there. Number one, humbly hearing God's word. Number two, diligently obeying God's word. And number three, faithfully demonstrating true religion.

I think the first two may be somewhat brief and then we'll spend the bulk of our time on the last one. So first, humbly hearing God's word.

That's what James calls God's people to. He calls them to humbly hear the word of God. Look at how he says it again in verses 19 to 21.

[ 8 : 33 ] Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Now, James 1, 19 and 20, we should recognize that. That was our memory verse last month and we just rehearsed it. And what James is addressing in verses 19 and 20 really is anger.

That's what's behind this command to let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to be angry.

Because it doesn't produce the righteousness that God requires. But if we are not quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to be angry, we will get angry and we will not manifest the righteousness that God desires.

[ 9 : 50 ] In verse 21, James addresses what is the root cause of what prevents us from being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to be angry.

He identifies it as filthiness and wickedness and the need to receive with meekness the implanted word. So in verse 21, what James does is he calls us to do that which will keep us from falling into sinful anger.

He says we are to put away, in essence, all moral filth, wickedness, which means sinful actions, sinful attitudes, and we are to humbly receive God's word in our hearts.

Sometimes when we look at the language of James and the things that he says, you almost are tempted to wonder whether he is addressing believers.

He calls his hearers to put away moral filth and wickedness. And he is addressing believers. If you just look back to verse 18, James says, of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

[ 11 : 07 ] And then he addresses them in verse 19 as beloved brothers. So James is addressing those who have been born of God, those who God by himself brought forth by the word of truth, that they should be a kind of firstfruits of new creatures, new creations.

And he addresses them as brothers. And so the clear reality is that we who belong to Christ sometimes manifest in our lives that which ought not to be in our lives.

And James calls us brothers, and yet he says to us, you must put away these things. And we need to understand, James is not calling us to moralism.

See, moralism is to say to people, in particular unbelieving people, stop doing this and start doing that. Don't go there and go here. And it's just moralism.

And they can stop doing those things and start doing new things and they're still lost. Those moral commands do not change unbelievers. But what James is doing is James is calling those who have been born of God, those who have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son, who still manifest sin in their lives.

[ 12 : 34 ] He's saying, put it away because God has saved you from that. And he gives you the grace to put it away. He gives you the grace to say no to sin. And this is why, this is not moralism, but this is calling God's people to do what he has saved them to do and call them to be.

And so we need to see that very, very clearly up front. We are called to do this because there's grace to do this. God enables us to do this.

So the bottom line that James is getting at in verses 19 to 21 is he is saying to us that we need to receive God's word with humility of heart.

That is what is going to enable us to be quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to be angry. Notice how he writes it. And it's important to really, when we're looking at God's word, to look at particular words that clue us in.

Notice in verse 21, it starts with therefore. And I've heard someone say, whenever you see therefore, you want to look closely to see what is therefore. And the reason it is here is James is cluing us back to what he said in verses 19 and 20.

[ 14 : 00 ] And he is saying, because I've called you to do that, therefore you must do this. Because if you do this, then you'll be able to do that. If you do what I'm saying to you, right here in verse 21, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive the word with meekness or with humility of heart.

If you do this, if you do this, then you'll be able to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to be angry.

Now, James ends verse 21 by saying, which is able to save your souls. Now, clearly, he's not talking about salvation in the sense of regeneration or justification, because he's already acknowledged in verse 18 that God has brought us forth by the word of God.

We've been born of God. He calls us brothers. And so the saving that he's talking about, the saving of our souls that he's talking about here, speaks to sanctification, which is another aspect of salvation.

And what sanctification is, is sanctification is becoming less and less sinful and more like Christ over time.

[ 15 : 18 ] And this is why we grow in sanctification. We don't become sanctified the moment we get saved. But over time, we grow in sanctification. We become less and less sinful and we become more like Christ.

And James is saying that if we humbly receive God's word, if we take God's word to heart, it'll have a sanctifying effect on our lives. It'll cause us over time to more be the people that God has called us to be.

And the key to this is to take it to heart. James says you to receive it with meekness. And what that means is to receive it in a humble way.

To take it to heart. And I think we all know what it is to hear versus to take something to heart. And all of us who are parents know, because we've had that experience where we talk to our children, they hear us, but they don't take it to heart.

We say it goes into one ear and out of the other. James is not talking about simply receiving in terms of hearing in a physical, audible sense.

[ 16 : 41 ] He's talking about hearing it with meekness, with humility, taking it to heart. It is only by taking God's word to heart that we are able to do what we are being called to be.

Slow, quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to be angry. So this brings me to my second point.

Diligently obeying God's word. In verse 22, notice that it begins with but. And that's a linking word.

It links verse 22 to verse 21. James is saying, but hearing is not enough. Notice again how he says it. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

And the implication is that self-deception increases over time in the person who is hearing God's word.

[ 17 : 47 ] They're coming face to face with God's word again and again, but they're not taking it to heart. They're not taking it to heart because what we take to heart, we do.

The evidence that we have taken something to heart is that we actually do it. And James is saying, but be doers of the word, not hearers only, because if that is what you do, you are deceiving yourselves.

And one of the reasons that a person can continually sit under the preaching of God's word, continually read God's word, the word calls them to do particular things and they don't do it, and they feel no way about it, is that they're deceived.

They're deceived. They're not realizing that that's just not normal. And over time, it's kind of like a spiritual blindness that can come over us.

James uses an illustration to help us to see the point he's making. In verses 23 and 24, he uses the illustration of a mirror.

[ 19 : 00 ] He says the person who hears God's word and doesn't obey God's word is like the person who intentionally looks at a mirror, sees what he looks like, then walks away and forgets to make any of the adjustments that he saw that he should make in the mirror.

And that's the whole purpose of mirrors. Mirrors are to show us reality. Mirrors are to show us what we look like that we otherwise would not see what we look like.

And the whole idea is for us to make adjustments based on what we see. James says people who look in God's word, and he uses incredibly helpful language to talk about God's word.

He says in verse 25, but the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hero who forgets, but a doer who acts, will be blessed in his doing.

And James refers to God's way. And James refers to God's word as the perfect law and the law of liberty. And these are insightful terms that he uses to describe God's word.

[ 20 : 30 ] Because there are many people who don't see God's word as a perfect law. They say it was written by man. And they discount it as outdated and irrelevant.

And they say it's not a law of liberty. It puts you in bondage. You can't do this. You can't do that. It tells you not to do this or not to do that. And they don't realize that true freedom is doing what we ought to do, not what we want to do.

And the law of liberty for God's children enables them to do what they ought to do. And so James is making the point that when we look in the mirror of God's word, when we look in the mirror of this word that is perfect, this word that brings liberty and freedom, and it calls us to live in particular ways, and we don't do that, James is saying, he says, you're really no different than the person who looks in the mirror, sees adjustments that they are supposed to make, and you go away and you forget what you're really being called to do.

Now let me just say two quick things. The first thing is, James is not addressing unbelievers. He's not addressing unbelievers.

He's not addressing unbelievers and calling them to do particular things. Again, he's already settled. We've been brought forth by the word of God.

[ 22 : 13 ] He calls us brothers. He is addressing believers. He is addressing believers who read God's word, believers who sit under the preaching of God's word, believers who go to Bible studies.

And this is an intentional thing that we do. When you open God's word to read it, that's intentional. You're looking into the mirror of God's word. When you make a decision to come and gather as you're doing this morning, that's intentional.

You are looking into the mirror of God's word. When you go to a Bible study, you make whatever preparations you go, you are looking into the mirror of God's word.

James is actually saying to us, every time we look into God's word, whatever the context may be, there's a response that is expected.

There's some way that God will have us to respond, even if that is to think differently and to believe differently about God, about ourselves, about others, about sin.

[ 23 : 16 ] It may convict us and call us to repent, or to confess our sin to someone, or to do a particular thing, but there is a response that we should always have as a result of coming face-to-face with God's word.

And what James is really getting to is that we must be applying God's word to our lives in some particular way. So we want to be thinking, Lord, how would you have me to respond to this?

Lord, what are you saying to me about this? Because if we don't have that attitude, we're the man in the mirror.

We're the man who goes, looks in the mirror, intentionally looking in the mirror, being affected in different ways, who walks away and makes no adjustments. James is addressing believers, and he's saying to us, whenever we encounter God's word, whenever we come face-to-face with God's word, we have to be responding in some way.

We have to be thoughtful about it. Lord, how would you have me to respond? And this is why it's a helpful practice for us when we, on a morning like this, when we gather and we hear God's word preached, and we'll go back, no doubt, to meals, and we'll sit together.

[ 24 : 43 ] It's a helpful practice to talk about, well, how did you benefit today from hearing God's word? And it's not just limited to God's word in terms of preaching, because even as we sing, as Brother David mentioned earlier, lyrics of songs speak to us as well.

They communicate truth from God as well. And so we can be affected in that way. And it's a helpful way to encourage one another, to apply God's word, to talk about how were you affected today?

How did you benefit today? What did you sense the Lord calling you to do today as a result of gathering and singing and praying and hearing his word preached?

It's a very, very helpful way to respond to God's word. Because if we do not, we're looking in the mirror, we're making no adjustments. And if we do that in an ongoing way, we bring upon ourselves a self-inflicted kind of spiritual blindness.

We deceive ourselves. And again, we're not conscious of it because we're deceived. And James doesn't want us to be deceived.

[ 25 : 55 ] He wants us to be doers of the word. And so even this morning, we are right now looking into the mirror of God's word.

And I pray that you're thinking about, how should I respond to what I'm hearing? God, what are you saying to me? How do you want me to respond to this?

James is saying to us that if we are people who are hearing God's word, taking it to heart, and we are doing God's word, it should result in some fruit in our lives in some way.

How we think, our view of God, our view of ourselves, our view of others, our view of sin, and what we do in response to what we have heard.

And what James wants to do is he wants to guard us against false religion. James wants to guard us against being people who have false religion, a religion that just isn't true, a religion that is inconsistent with the people that God has called us to be.

[ 27 : 10 ] And this brings me to my third and final point, faithfully demonstrating true religion. Now, while verses 26 and 27 might seem as a separate thought, what James said in the previous seven verses is very much connected to what he says in verses 26 and 27.

Here in verses 26 and 27, James says that the life of a truly religious person, a person who is a hearer of God's word, he takes God's word to heart, and he does God's word, he says that person's life is marked by three things.

Now, James is not saying that these three things exhaustively communicate true religion. He's not saying that. But he's saying these three things are evidence of true religion.

There are the marks, but he says these three in particular identify us as having true religion if they mark our lives.

And they are, number one, a bridal tongue, number two, a caring heart, and number three, a holy life. The point that James makes is this.

[ 28 : 35 ] He's saying, if you are humbly receiving God's word, taking it to heart, and you are diligently obeying God's word, he says your life is going to have evidence of true religion.

And here are three marks of true religion. That's what James is saying to us. And the first mark that he addresses is a bridled tongue in verse 26.

Notice how he says it again. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, that person's religion is worthless.

Notice that James connects right back to what he started in verse 19 where he says you need to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to be angry.

And he's saying here in verse 26, he says, if you can't bridle your tongue and you think you're a religious person, he says your religion is worthless. His point is that governed or controlled speech is a mark of true religion.

[ 29 : 44 ] And the person who lacks this kind of control, thinking that he's religious when he clearly is not, that person's religion is worthless.

That's bridling our tongue. That's being able to keep our tongues in check. James uses a very strong word for worthless.

This word is sometimes used in the New Testament to describe idolatry. James says, if we have this person that he is describing can't keep our tongues, he says, the religion we have is no better than idolatry.

It's worthless. And that's strong language because it's a serious issue. And James wants to guard us against being people who walk around with false religion because we have not taken God's word to heart.

We have not been diligent to obey it. And therefore, we don't have the fruit of it, but we profess to be religious. I think you'd all agree that the ability to have a bridle tongue goes back to being a humble person.

[ 31 : 06 ] It goes back to the need to have humility. That's the only way we'll be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to be angry if our lives are marked by humility.

Because sometimes to have a bridle tongue means that you say nothing in response to provocation. sometimes it means that you have to return a soft answer in the face of anger or wrath.

Sometimes it means having and being intentional to be careful in your speech, thoughtful in your speech, when the other person has no boundaries and they can say whatever they want to say to you and you're called to respond in a different manner.

What James is calling us to, brothers and sisters, requires humility. And I think we can all consider on this particular point how is this mark in our lives, those of us who belong to Christ.

What is your life or what does my life say about the religion that I have and the religion that you have in terms of my ability and your ability to bridle your tongue and my tongue?

[ 32 : 49 ] What does it look like? What does that look like in our lives? Is your speech evidence of a person whose life is in genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

As a husband or as a wife, what does the way you speak to your spouse say about your religion? Or parents and children?

What does the way you speak to one another say about your religion? And we can think about this in the context of work as well.

What does our speech at work look like and sound like and what does it say about the religion that we have? when was the last time you were minded to say something and you were checked by the Spirit and you didn't say that?

When was the last time that you were in an argument? did you have to have the last word? And I'll say this to us husbands, not because we're the head does it mean that we always must have the last word.

[ 34 : 25 ] Does it mean that? And certainly to wives because you're not the head you should not insist on having the last word.

But brothers and sisters all of these things are expressions of true religion. They are the result of the extent to which we have taken God's word to heart and we have been intentional and diligent to obey what God is saying to us.

James says it's going to make a difference in what your life actually looks like. The second mark that James identifies is in verse 27.

He says religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.

Put another way James is saying that true religion is evidenced by a caring heart. Now James specifies orphans and widows and he talks about visiting them in their affliction and that's because in the Old and New Testament orphans and widows were deemed among the most helpless and vulnerable people in society.

[ 36 : 02 ] There were no social nets that looked after them. They were just exposed and they were vulnerable. They needed protection so God commanded the people to protect them and to care for them and God even threatened punishment against those who would mistreat them and not take care of them.

Now orphans and widows are not the only helpless people. There are the people who are helpless and not all orphans and not all widows are vulnerable and needy.

Some are actually quite wealthy. but James highlights them. But what's interesting is that there's a group that James doesn't highlight that Scripture actually calls for protection for as well.

In Jeremiah 23 and verse 3 this is what it says, Thus says the Lord do justice and righteousness and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed and do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless and the widows nor shed innocent blood in this place.

So here the Lord mentions three of them and what you will find in the Old Testament in particular is these three are always mentioned together. The alien, the fatherless and the widow.

[ 37 : 39 ] But what James says, he highlights just two of them and I think the reason he only highlights the fatherless or the orphan and the widow is that the people he was writing to they themselves were aliens.

They themselves were foreigners living in lands that were not of their home and so you could see perhaps why he doesn't address them in that area.

He calls them to the other two caring for the orphans and caring for the widows. And the way James called them to care for them is he said you're to visit them in their affliction.

Visit the widow and visit the orphan in their affliction. He's calling them to not be indifferent to.

He's calling them to identify with the plight and the affliction of these helpless ones around them.

[ 38 : 39 ] And it's interesting that James doesn't outrightly call them to give money although that certainly is within the scope of caring. James called them to do what every single one of them could do and that is to care.

I think we've all experienced it where we've been able to have concern for people beyond our ability to do anything for them. Beyond our ability to tangibly materially help them.

And so James is saying that one of the marks of a person who has true religion, a person who has taken God's word to heart, who is obeying God's word, is that he cares for the less fortunate, has a heart for them.



Now you may be thinking that you don't know any widows, you don't know any orphans, and if you're thinking like that, maybe you're thinking too narrowly.

That's not what James is really getting at. He's not just simply saying, look at the widows, look at the orphans. He's speaking about people in need broadly.

[ 39 : 53 ] And certainly in our context, in our context, one of the categories, and that's the category that James does not mention, that is certainly very relevant to us, is the resident alien.

Our nation is filled with them. Not all of them are needy. Some of them are not needy, they're not helpless, but many of them are.

And in our case, true religion can be measured by how our heart is towards those who are needy. Do we have a concern for them?

And in our context, that's largely Haitian immigrants. Do we have a concern for them? Do we have a heart for them?

How do we treat them? how do we treat the one who perhaps cuts our grass or claims our home or claims our office? At minimum, we should be treating them fairly in terms of the wage we pay them in accordance with the law.

[ 41 : 04 ] Minimum. we're called to identify with their plight. We're called to have a heart for them.

And I'm very much aware in our culture, generally, we tend to have a prejudice towards foreigners, generally, and in particular towards Haitians.

And for those of us who belong to Christ, if we have true religion, that would not be true of us. If we have taken God's word to heart, and we are obeying God's word, prejudice would not be part of our practice, would not be part of our attitude.

We would not be going the way of the culture. And brothers and sisters, if our hearts are the same, as the unbelievers in society, we have false religion.

We don't have true religion. Because there's no way to be able to hear God in his word, take that to heart, and then it doesn't affect the way we live and the way we respond to those who are marginalized and to those who are weak.

[ 42 : 28 ] and it matters not whether they are legal. It matters not. We can still, and indeed must, still have a caring heart towards them because it is an evidence of true religion.

and if maybe this is resting on your heart in a way that maybe you're not sure about, I encourage you to reflect upon it.

I encourage you to do what James is calling us to do, that we are to be looking into the word intently and seeing how God will have us to respond. I encourage you to reflect on it.

the final words of verse 27 point us to the third mark of true religion that James identifies for us, which is a holy life.

James says, pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is to keep oneself unstained from the world. it's important to see what James is actually saying here.

[ 43 : 42 ] James is actually not even addressing blatant, high-handed sin. He's not addressing that. That obviously is included.

Blatant, high-handed sin is committing adultery and stealing and lying and doing all manner of things that are clearly contrary to the word of God. James says, that an evidence of true religion is to keep oneself unstained from the world.

It is not allowing the world to stain us in particular ways. And when James is referring to the world, and we shared this last week, I believe, James is referring, not to the physical world, but he's referring to the world that is fallen humanity, that's organized in rebellion against God without reference to his laws, without reference to his values, and indifferent to coming judgment.

That's the world that James is referring to. It's the world that God has saved us out of, and now he says, don't be stained by it. And I think all of us have experienced at one time or another where something stained us.

And the way we got stained was we got too close to it. Maybe we were carrying something and we didn't realize how close it was to our shirt or dress and it spilled on us, it stained on us.

[ 45 : 12 ] James is saying to us that we have to keep a distance from the world to a sufficient degree that the world does not stain us by its values, by the way it thinks, by the way it has an outlook on life.

James is aware that the world has a staining potential for God's people and he alerts us to it.

How aware are you of the staining potential of the world? How aware are you of the various contexts where you are being exposed and I am being exposed to the staining effect of the world?

I'm sure there are many we could think about this one but I just want to mention one because it's a broad one and I'm sure it covers all of us. One is in the broad area of entertainment.

Much of the entertainment that is produced does not have God's people in mind. When people sat down to produce that form of entertainment whatever it is whether it's a movie, or a game, they generally did not have Christians in mind.

[ 46 : 32 ] And we should be aware of that. And in truth we have no right to demand from them to produce something for us. And we have no right to compromise and say well this is the best among all the offerings and so we'll listen to this.

I remember this story about a guy going to see a movie and his friend who was concerned about the content of movies asked him, he said, what's the movie like?

Does it have profanity? He said, just one word. And his friend went and came back livid because the movie was laced with profanity.

And he said, how could you tell me that it was only one word? He said, well, it was one word that just said it a lot. And sometimes that's what we do.

We can actually medicate ourselves where we can swallow things, where we sit and we drink in the humanism that comes through our screens. And whether that humanism is from Oprah Winfrey or from Dr. Phil or some recent upstart, all of it, brothers and sisters, is worldly and all of it will stain us if we are not careful.

[ 47 : 51 ] It will stain us to cause us to begin to think the way the world lives. And when we do that, we end up with false religion.

We end up with a religion that is inconsistent with the word of God that we profess, the word of God that we have looked into, that we have heard, but we have not obeyed.

And this, brothers and sisters, is an ongoing process. James says that we are to keep ourselves unstained from the world.

It would be wonderful if you can just make a decision and it's all done, but no, every single day we have to keep ourselves unstained from the world, and the way we do that is we remind ourselves every single day the world has a staining, a sin staining potential on my life.

God, give me wisdom to navigate it, that I will be unstained by the world. Otherwise, the religion we profess will be worthless.

[ 48 : 59 ] Brothers and sisters, those who humbly hear and diligently obey God's word will faithfully demonstrate true religion.

And true religion is marked by a bridal tongue, by a caring heart, and by a holy life. We can say all that we want, we can do all that we want, but a religion that is void of these things is no better than idolatry.

And it's an evidence that we are deceived. And so brothers and sisters, let us, let's hear God's word this morning and let's respond to it. And the last thing I want to say to us is that we should not be thinking about what we're going to do and not be aware that we need grace to do it.

We need God's grace to motivate us to do it. We need God's grace to enable us to do it. Without his grace, we'll fall flat on our faces and we'll be condemned.

because our efforts fall short. We need God's grace to do this. And so I want to begin by reminding us of our need for that by concluding in prayer.

[ 50 : 31 ] Father, would you sensitize our hearts right now to the fact that we need your grace to live in this way. We need your grace to humbly receive your word.

We need your grace to diligently obey your word. And Lord, we need your grace to demonstrate true religion.

I pray in this moment that you would help us all to be thoughtful about how you'd have us to respond. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.