

Title: DO THIS, NOT THAT, JAMES 1:19-27  
(Chatham, NJ; 08/30/15, AM) [Pc – Exegesis]

Theme: On several topics James presents what we should and should not do to live the faith we profess.

Purpose: To clarify the contrasting way of life of Christianity with that of a non-Christian way of life.

Introduction:

1. Perhaps you've seen the diet books, "*Eat This, Not That.*"
2. Essentially the books demonstrate how to substitute healthy foods for high calorie, high fat choices.
3. James does something of this sort in this section of his letter:
  - Receive the word with meekness; put away wickedness
  - Be doers, not hearers only
  - Live a pure religion, not a worthless religion

## **I. Meekness, Not Filthiness and Rampant Wickedness, 19-21**

### **A. Meekness**

1. Inherit the earth, Mt. 5:5 & Psalm 37:11
2. A meek person is one who can be trained and motivated by the Lord, and one who can be directed by his commands
3. Hence, the meekness (or humility) of receiving the implanted word, 21
4. Eric Greitens, a former Navy SEAL says (in line with what I said two weeks ago): "Humility leads to clarity. Humility leads to an open mind and a forgiving heart. With an open mind and a forgiving heart, I see every person as superior to me in some way; with every person as my teacher, I grow in wisdom."
5. In James' way of thinking, we must be meek in hearing and receiving the Word of God
6. Meekness is the foundation of being "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to become angry," 19

### **B. Filthiness and Rampant Wickedness**

1. The contrast between A & B is unique: it assumes behavior change
2. Nothing less than a renunciation of moral evil
3. The two terms emphasize a complete renovation of behavior
4. The writer's later emphasis on works that demonstrate faith is most certainly behind this exhortation to receive the work and live a life consistent with the Word of God

## **II. Be Doers of the Word, Not Hearers Only, 22-25**

### **A. Doers Are People Who Obey**

1. Only those who do the will of the Father enter the Kingdom, Mt. 7:21
2. The Wise Man not only heard but he obeyed; the Foolish Man heard but didn't obey
3. Again, Eric Greitens: "Remember that deciding is not doing and wanting is not choosing. Transformation will take place not because of what you decide you want, but because of what you choose to do." (*Resilience*, 47)
4. Ezekiel's audiences listened but never obeyed the word "that comes from the Lord," Ez. 33:30-33

### **B. Not Hearers Only, 22**

1. Hearing only can be deceptive: because we know the right thing to do, we think we are superior or have accomplished something
2. We solidify our inaction with excuses: I'll wait until later; it's too hard; I'm too busy; life is unfair
3. If we are honest we would be saying, "I just don't want to."
4. The Parable of the Two Sons aptly describes who acts and who doesn't, Mt. 21:28-32

5. Character is shaped by our actions not by our intentions

### III. Pure Religion, Not Worthless Religion, 26-27

- A. Pure 1 – Keep unstained from the world
  1. We might think that we have to wait for “critical decision” moments to do this
  2. We focus too much on the difficult dilemmas that we might at some time in the possible future have to face and determine what we would do
  3. However, life does not happen that way
  4. Our lives are shaped by many small decisions; life builds by accumulation: so does our moral compass, Hebrews 5:14
  5. Stop worrying about the possible big decisions and focus on the small ones you face every day
  6. We know what keeping unstained from the world means; we don’t need to solve every moral dilemma to do this
- B. Pure 2 – Help the helpless
  1. Being responsible for others gives us a sense of purpose we wouldn’t otherwise have
  2. God’s heart is near those who have no power in this world
  3. The vulnerable in society need people to help them, but let’s differentiate between those who are truly helpless and those who only want to lean on others
- C. Not worthless religion
  1. This is a religion of talk only
  2. James touches a raw nerve that he will develop later in his extended discourse on the evils of an uncontrolled tongue
  3. In this passage he makes it clear that uncontrolled speech has as much value as trying to spend Confederate money

#### Conclusions:

1. Meekness trumps an immoral lifestyle.
2. Talk is cheap; actions speak louder than words.
3. Pure religion is one that focuses on living a pure life, helping the helpless, and controlling one’s tongue.
4. Such a life is pleasing to God.
5. Turn to him today and live this life.