

“Devoted”: A Message from the Book of James

Introduction:

In our youth ministry, we have spent this year with an underlying word guiding us. That word is “DEVOTED”. This DEVOTION is what separates American Christianity apart from Christianity across the world.

In Ecuador, new believers see witnessing and church planting similar to baptism as it immediately follows their conversion. The IMB has taken their missionaries out of this once needy continent because of DEVOTED Christians rapidly spreading their faith.

In Muslim countries, Christians still live out and share their faith despite “Sharia Law” calling for the execution of those converting from Islam.

In Africa, poor and starving Christians travel over 10 miles to make hearing God’s Word a priority.

In China, Christians are regularly risking their lives to meet in secret house churches. Their passion for their faith has led their country to now outnumber the US in evangelical Christians.

In America... Christians have the privilege of using our financial resources and the excuse of “I’m praying for you” as a pass to not go or serve.

In America... Church attendance is based on weather.

In America... Christians are arriving 10 minutes early to claim the seat that now molds to their shape.

In America... Christians think witnessing is only for select individuals with that spiritual gift.

In America... Christians see serving as a sacrifice instead of a blessing and privilege.

In America... Christians have achieved the status of being able to look and act just like the world.

In America... Christians have lost the concept of true Christianity, a Christianity of being “DEVOTED” to a Savior who shed His blood for us.

The bad news is that we are those Christians who have allowed the American dream and our media-centered culture to define the Christian life instead of God’s Word. The good news is that we can learn from those long before us who also dealt with the same issues, just in a different context.

Turn to James 1

Transition from Introduction:

James, probably the half-brother of Jesus, wrote a letter to a Jewish Christian community who had left Jerusalem due to persecution. What is interesting about his letter is that you don't find James pointing out any "sins" or wrongdoings that the world would frown against. He doesn't even point out anyone in this community breaking the 10 Commandments. But, what he clearly saw was a group of Christians who had all of the "Christian basics" covered, yet lacked any DEVOTED passion for Christ. James writes this letter as these Christians begin to question their current hardships and wonder why they aren't experiencing God's blessings, but experiencing trials and temptations.

I. Our God is a good God who blesses...but who does He bless?

*Read the end of **James 1:25** ("this person will be blessed in what he does").

*Being blessed is what the people longed for. This is also what we long for. The God who created the universe can and seeks to bless His children. But, James shares with us that it is a chosen group who He opens the floodgates of His blessings on. God blesses the "DEVOTED".

A. God blesses those who are not just hearers, but doers (James 1:22)

1. The "doers"/DEVOTED don't just have faith, but also works (**James 2:26**)
2. The "doers"/DEVOTED act on what they have heard (**James 1:23-25**)
 - *those that don't are like someone who looks in a mirror, sees a cowlick, and does nothing about it
 - *use mirror for illustration**
 - *we see, we get convicted, we talk, but we never fix

B. God blesses those that do the "small things" that we think don't matter

1. If James were to write to you personally or to our church, he might have pointed out different areas, but there were a few areas that this group was being passive about and rationalizing because they weren't the "big sins".
 - a. showing favoritism & ignoring the needy
 - b. not controlling your tongue/words
 - c. being proud and criticizing others

2. We cannot rationalize not being obedient to areas that God convicts us on.
 - *If we ignore His conviction or calling IT IS SIN (**James 4:17**)
 - *What are the areas that we ignore (doing one of the things James mentioned? calling to serve or to go? how we use our finances?)?
3. He also reminds us that we can no longer label things as big or little sins. These sins equally break our relationship with the God who loves and wants to bless us just as does murder or lying (**James 2:10**).

II. What is the main reason why we choose not to “DO” what God calls us?

A. We are lovers of the world...lovers of the American Way

***James 4:1-3** point out that these Christians wanted God’s blessings, but deep down their hearts were not “DEVOTED” to God

B. When we decide that the cost of being fully DEVOTED to Christ is too high and the approval of the world is more enticing, we are cheating on our God.

*We are called “Adulteresses”!!! Enemies of God!!!! And we make God jealous. (**James 4:4-5**)

*Think of what those words mean in the mind of God?

III. Conclusion

A. Make a rededication of your life to be DEVOTED to Him

B. Give over specific sins of something you are doing or aren’t doing

C. Salvation

James ends with reminding us the power of the church body (James 5:16**). He reminds us that we are in this together. He reminds us that when we confess our shortcomings (which we all have) that we have a group of believers that will pray for us and help guide us.