

“Leg’s On Our Faith”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

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The epistle lesson for today is from the first chapter of James, verses 22 through 25. I’ll be reading from *The Common English Bible*. “You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves. Those who hear but don’t do the word are like those who look at their faces in a mirror. They look at themselves, walk away, and immediately forget what they were like. But there are those who study the perfect law, the law of freedom, and continue to do it. They don’t listen and then forget, but they put it into practice in their lives. They will be blessed in whatever they do.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. Lord God, who gives ears to hear, help us to receive your word today. Encourage us when returning home today to look into the mirror and do more than just glance at the reflection. Motivate us to see ourselves as the word of God reflects to us things we need to change about ourselves with God’s power. Amen.

The book of James says a lot about becoming a mature disciple of Christ. The bottom line that James is getting across is this. Are we doing what God’s word says? Are we walking our talk? Wisdom and maturity doesn’t occur in one’s life just because they’re older. Not everyone who grows old grows wise, and age and maturity aren’t the same thing.

Mature Christians are filled with the spirit of God and practice what they preach. They will mess up, and real good sometimes, but they’re doing their best to apply God’s word to their lives. They stay away from the BIG mistakes. They

work side by side with others. They encourage one another and want to build their church into a place where people cultivate a personal relationship with Christ.

Verses 22 through 25 are only four verses, but they're some of the most difficult to apply. We come to church, we hear the word, but do we act on it? At times we can have this deep and ongoing forgetfulness about who we are and whose we are. Sometimes our behavior is willful, certainly not godly, and we can leave our religious self almost unable to function as God intended. That kind of heart position keeps our spiritual maturity as if it's frozen.

It's like we wallow back and forth standing still in our stubbornness and can't see what's happening. All we have at the end of the day is a shallow profession of faith. When we hear the word it's received, we know it's true, but we have trouble acting on it. And when we feel our toes stepped on, our response isn't inward it's outward. We blame others instead of looking at ourselves. Faith is more than intellectual assent and knowledge and information.

Our aim as a Christian is to be changed through the doing of what the word says. We need to put some legs on our faith. Christopher, come up front and stand in front of the altar rail. Chris, about 10 years from now God may say to you, "Chris, take this job. This is the one for you." And you might say, "But God, the other job pays more money and I can meet a lot more girls there." Then God will say, "Do what I said Chris."

So Chris says, "Okay God." Now I need about 6 strong men, and one to help him to stand on the altar with his back toward the congregation. He takes a giant leap of faith without seeing where he might land, and he's successful. Go ahead Chris. FALL! God was right! God's word guided him correctly!

With all of us, there's got to be a willing cooperation to do as God leads. We can't expect to be changed by God unless we listen, and do what God says. That's

the challenge. We're created to work together with God to achieve God's purpose in our lives, but we need a willing and courageous heart.

James gives us an illustration. He says the word of God is like a mirror. The foolish person hears the word, but doesn't do it. Jesus is the one who said we're foolish if we only hear and don't do the word. And then there's the wise person in Matthew. He hears the words of God, and puts them into practice. So when the rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house it didn't fall because it was built on a Rock.

Jesus calls the man a fool who doesn't do the word. He said that's the one who hears the words, but doesn't put them into practice. They do what they want, buy a cheap plot of land, and build a house on the sand. And we know what happens next, the rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house. It fell and was completely destroyed You know sometimes our lives feel as though they're going crazy, so crazy, we wonder if our house *will* fall. It's then that the Holy Spirit brings back to our remembrance God's word.

Now most people will also have those times when they step over that line—it's called transgression. It's stepping over that line that was created by God. Being tempted to step over isn't sin, it's when we entertain stepping over, wonder what it would be like, and then do it.

We step over it one to many times. The stepping is willful and intentional, but you think it'll be okay—or you don't think at all. You just do what you want and trust your own judgment. Beware friends. It might be the straw that breaks the camel's back and turns around and bites when you're least expecting.

What we pray for is that the Holy Spirit would bring the word of God back to our remembrance, but if you're not taking it in, if you're not putting it in your heart, how can the spirit bring it back? It's close to walking in the dark. You don't

even know why you tripped. You point your fingers outwardly instead of looking at yourself.

I was the kind of believer for the first ten years of my Christian walk who thought that going to church would be enough. I started reading God's word and thought the Word would miraculously effect the change that was needed in my character. Trouble was I lacked the follow-through. I thought going to church was an end in and of itself. What I really needed was the humility to ask God for help to be transformed—to stop complaining about others—and take a good long hard look at myself. The Word of God calls for a response. We must do what it says; otherwise, it's like pouring water into a sieve. It's shallow faith if it's faith at all. **Let's listen to a video and see the effects of shallow faith in somebody else's life. Take a listen.**

What we need is follow-through, for a Christian that means to complete something and do what was promised. So when God commands us to serve each other, our community, and to give financially *that means* we take deliberate daily steps that fulfill the promise we've made.

James says we can be like those who look in a mirror. They look at themselves, walk away, and immediately forget what they were like. That's the person who only hears God's word and doesn't respond to it and stays spiritually immature. We need to do more than just glance at the Bible. We need to take a good hard look at it when we read it, because when we *do* read it we see an image of who we can become in Christ.

The word "look" in verse 24 means to stoop down to look; it means to look closely at something and to examine it with an aim to comprehend, believe, and obey. Good intentions mean very little. Let's not choose to be just hearers who are foolish, let's be wise. As we hear and receive, let's determine to obey the word as

we ask God to empower and transform us. Let's pray. Lord God who blesses his children with all they need to obey. Motivate us to listen, to take it in, and then to express it and carry it out to be doers of your word. Amen.