**Cross And Crown Christian Outreach**

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**Hear And Listen.**

**My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. -** Jms. 1:19

James, the brother of Jesus Christ had written a letter to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered among nations giving several advises to help them retain their identity and relationship with their God. He started with his advice to them to manage trials of life very well and avoid temptations which he said is the result of wrong desires - Jms. 1:2-18. He further advised them to be quick to listen, not only to one another but also to word of God and be doers of God’s Words (Jms. 1:19-25). The scripture for today is part of these early set of advises to those whom he considered as brothers and sisters in the Lord and the highlights are as follows:

1. They should be quick to listen.
2. They should be slow to speak.
3. They should be slow to get angry.
4. They should get rid of moral filth and evil .
5. They should humbly accept the Word that is planted in them.

There is no doubt that these set of advises like several others in his letter remain relevant to the Christian today and it would be of immense advantage if a deeper view at them is taken.

The first is for Christians to be quick to listen. Most people hear but do not listen. To hear will be to sense sound made by someone. In this instance, the hearer of the sound interprets the sound based mostly on previously acquired knowledge about the meaning of such sounds or an assumed knowledge based on the hearer's expectation. The product of hearing mostly is mis-communication as what is said is different from what registers in the hearer. However, listening is the product of proper processing of what was heard. The hearer does not just act on what is said but attempts to have a proper understanding of what is said which some times may include further requests for clarification of all or some parts of what is heard. Christians need to do more of listening than hearing as more appropriate reaction is more likely with listening than hearing. One who hears but does not listen is worse than a deaf person. James advises that Christians be more eager to listen than hear. No doubt, this remains a major advise that will not only continue to engender relationship with the Almighty God but also with fellow men. Do not just hear, listen before reacting.

The second is for Christians to be slow to speak. Even after listening, Christians are advised to weigh responses before voicing them. They are not expected to just talk, which is to release a chain of words from the mouth, but they are to speak, which is the careful release of words to convey an information or a feeling. Even when they have to speak, they are to weigh the impact of every word used before using them. Words can be very heavy and that is why the tongue remains a very dangerous tool in the possession of a foolish person – Jms. 3:3-12. A wise person will guard his tongue and use it only when it is absolutely necessary and that will be to achieve maximum impact. All who talk without processing properly the effect of what is said will hardly experience peace. Beyond the fact that pronouncements of individuals have landed them in one form of bondage or the other, not being careful with what is said remains the major causes of disharmony in the world today. Do not just talk, speak because there is something positive to achieve with the speech, else it may be best to keep quiet. Talk is only cheap before it is done but the consequences of wrong talk can be very much unaffordable to the one who talked. Do not just talk, learn to speak.

The third point to take from the advise of James is for Christians to be slow to anger. Anger which is defined as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility is not always negative. Just as badly managed anger can destroy good things, anger properly directed can be the foundation of positive change in some situations. Management of anger starts from the reasons for getting angry in the first place. There is the need for patient processing of all issues before taking to anger, and even if anger is justified, the act must be sensibly managed. An unjustified, mis-directed or badly managed anger will always produce regrets. To manage anger is to be in full control of all the actions taken before, during and after the expression of the emotion of anger, as loss of personal control at any of these stages will no longer present the picture of an angry person but most likely that of a mentally deranged person.

The fourth point recommended by James is for the Christian to get rid of moral filth and evil. All the above processes of listening, speaking and avoiding anger will be better managed if Christians avoid immorality and shun evil. The Bible says it is from the abundance of the heart that a man speaks – Lk. 6:45; Matt. 12:34. A man of evil will think evil, speak evil and act evil. The tool around one is the first that will be deployed during a period of anger and one surrounded by immorality and evil cannot be different. An immoral or evil person will not only process words in an immoral or evil manner, but will also speak and react in similar manner. An evil or immorally minded person always sees and hears evil and immorality. To shun evil and immorality is to persistently avoid, ignore and reject it. It is a conscious effort against something that may come consciously into one or attempt to creep into one’s life through the back door. Both ways, it should be forcefully resisted.

The last advice that the Christian today can take away from James is to accept the Word that is planted in them humbly. No doubt, the best way to resist something is to fill the space it wants to occupy with something else as nature abhors vacuum. To resist evil and immorality, the Christian is advised to accept the Word of God. The Word of God is God Himself and there can be no room for evil or immorality of any form where the Almighty God is – Jn. 1:1-5. James advises the Christian not to just accept the Word of God but to do so humbly. To accept the Word humbly is to have a mind of being nothing before the Almighty God. That one does not have any other personal thoughts or ideas outside what the Word of God is saying. To see the Word of God as not just light but the only light and lamp – Ps. 115:109. Any other way of acceptance of the Word will render the Word ineffective in the life of the person. To have any other alternative to make a choice from when you are to listen, speak or act is to remain prone to the danger of hearing, talking and anger. Make the Word of God your only standard and measure all your actions by it. You will no doubt avoid regrets and joy will remain yours always in Jesus name. Amen

There is a lot to gain by the Christian if the advises of James can be taken to heart and put to practice just as he also advised that Christians should not just hearers, but also doers. Let us apply these golden words and there is no doubt that we will return to give positive testimonies of our Christian experience. That will be our portion in Jesus name. Amen.