Subject: What's been on your mind lately?
Posted by william on Wed, 27 Feb 2008 15:52:32 GMT
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The Word *is* central to our religion. I know I'm preaching to the choir... but this is what I've been dwelling on for the last few days.

Acts 6:2-4 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Something I've been mulling over is this:

Religion, and I'm not referring to the modern-day conception of religion, (or the present-day abhorrence for the term religion in many circles, but true religion, or pure religion as James puts it) the type that stands for "the faith" is crucial for the believer.

It seems to me that according to James, religion (read the faith) is two-fold, both inward and outward.

The center of this religion is the Word of God. Without the Word of God being taught/preached we have no religion. It is one thing to sit around and praise God for His goodness (a good thing) but it is quite another to think that the gospel of the kingdom will grow or spread without an active preaching of the Word. This is why the spoken Word is so important to the Church.

Our Christian walk begins when we hear and receive the word of truth:

James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Matthew 13 teaches the centrality of the Word in the believer's life in the parable of the sower. If that Word doesn't find a proper resting place in our hearts we will end up on the wrong side of salvation.

Back to James... what I'm seeing is the importance of that Word in a believer's life:

James 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Some translate it the implanted Word, but however you translate it, the meaning is the same,

without it your salvation is questionable.

Anyway, beginning with these verses re-read the book of James (actually go ahead and start at the beginning!) with this in mind:

1) The OT saints were taught the Word of God.
2) The OT saints that believed the Word, acted on the Word.
3) Religion in the OT had both an inward and outward aspect.
4) Religion, when it became simply an outward observance of rules and regulations, ceased to be true religion and was condemned by God. (You see this carried over to the NT with the Pharisees.)

Compare:

1) The NT saints were taught the Word of God through the preaching of the Gospel.
2) The NT saints that believe, must act on the Word.
3) Religion, or the faith, in the NT has both an inward and outward aspect.
4) Religion, in the NT, when it becomes what we refer to as "easy believeismâ€•, is condemned by God. (Throughout the book of James you see this "inward only faith,â€• which is not true faith, condemned.)

To summarize my thinking and make a broad generalization<grin>

True religion has an inward aspect, which must be preceded by hearing or reading the Word of God (Rm10:17), and primarily deals with our relationship to God, our worship of God, etc., and an outward aspect, which deals primarily with our duties toward our fellow man/woman.

OT saints tended to major on the outward (Isaiah deals with this phenomenon-see below).

NT saints tend to focus on the inward (James deals with this problem-see below).

Both will result in our missing the mark.

Without both we have nothing. --William

Is 1:10-18 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an

abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.