

01 Hearers and Doers (side 1)

I was discussing a matter this afternoon with someone, and we touched upon a theme that might be helpful since this is immediately after the days of Unleavened Bread.

And in those weeks, of course, which followed the story of the children of Israel out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, there were trials and problems, and it brings up a question that may help some of us understand better.

Why is it that some people who have been among us for a long or a short time no longer stay? Why is it that some who have known for a long time of the Church and of this work, after years come to themselves, and in a time when others leave, they become converted? How do you explain why it is that sometimes the man or the woman you marry is not the same afterward? You fought on the basis of everything that they were converted, part of the Church, and now the state of affairs in the home is quite different.

I think we need to look at this question and ask ourselves just what it means to be converted, what it means to remain converted, and how do you perceive other people in terms of marriage, in terms of marriage for your children? I had the interesting experience this morning of talking to a man who has two children.

I've known each of them for the children for many years.

The one had been baptized, was always interested in the work of the Church, seemed to have a part in it, had problems, marriage has finally been involved in divorce, has married someone else who is not a member, doesn't think this is the only Church, doesn't attend anymore, converted out, seemingly converted.

Another in contrast is a sad situation turned good, thank you, for years not baptized, then becomes baptized in a crisis such as this work has gone through, has no doubt that this is God's Church.

Again family, you try to figure that out, and yet you know it's all laid out, I'm going to pick a few books, I probably could take any set of books of the Bible and approach it to analyze this question, but I thought we should take three letters, that is three writers, James and Peter and John, and take a look at how they have explained this problem.

First of all, it is very common for us when we go through books of the Bible to try to explain the author in a way that of course we never have our letters explained, somebody reads our letters and hopefully we understand them, but somehow when people read James, they don't, or Peter or John, they don't tend to read them in terms of clearly understanding what the author is telling us, we begin to ponder why the author uses one word instead of another, and that we don't normally read letters from friends in the same manner.

So I would propose this evening that we are not analyzing the book of James, the books of Peter, or the books of John, but we are looking to see just briefly what each one of these men has to tell us about the problem, why we have some congregations that are absolutely firm and solid and loyal, and I should like to at this point bring greetings since I was in the last Holy Day at Tulare, from the Bakersfield Church, from the Fresno Church and the Visalia Church, happily there were individuals who had become rankled, who had come back and I hope what I said there enabled them to have at

least an understanding of what they were upset over, and we have congregations that have all but disappeared because of leadership and because the people themselves have some responsibility.

Shepherds are necessary, but it doesn't mean that because one sheep goes astray, the other ninety-nine have to.

The foolishness of one sheep is not an excuse for somebody else to go through the same hole in the fence.

James is addressing the question of faith initially because he speaks of the testing of your faith, and I happen to have the common Bible, which is the RSV done in England with the general imprimatur of the Catholic Church as well as the varied Protestant bodies that participated in its general analysis.

When I read material, as we might this evening, I like to choose a variant version.

Sometimes it might be the New English Bible, sometimes this, and sometimes the King James.

All depends on what is most effective in terms of oral reading.

In this case, the question is the testing of your faith.

Now it does seem that at certain periods of time, there were earlier periods it was the same way, but let's say in 1973, 74, and now in 1978, 79, we have problems in which people become upset and make decisions that somehow they seemingly wouldn't have made at other times.

Now in this question of the testing of faith, James says in verse 4, let your steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.

Now that is the ultimate statement of what man is to become in terms of character, which is made possible through the testing or the challenging, if you please, of one's faith, that you may be perfect and complete and lacking in nothing.

Therefore we may presume immediately from this that when people are lacking something fundamental in their stability, they really need to examine just how steadfast they are.

Are they easily moved by external pressures, by embarrassments of the conduct of others, they hear others say of third parties.

Now look at verse 12, see we're not looking at the book of James, we're looking at the material in this and other books to answer our question this evening as to why some people remain, why some do not, and why some people that were among us are not in terms of family, in terms of responsibility in the church, and some who stayed out for a long time, didn't know whether they wanted to commit themselves, often come into the church and are baptized in a time of crisis, as well as the time of peace.

Look at verse 12, blessed is the man who endures trials, now we are going through a period of trial, and there are people who have left, and I will illustrate without implicating anyone, that's not the purpose here, but just to pick out illustrations of characters.

We have individuals in the church who when a trial comes suddenly disappear because they don't want the strain of a trial.

We've had individuals who have had this problem that they only want to have faith in quietness and peace, and have no testing of their faith.

Now there are some with that problem, we're going to find any number of problems, but this is the way James approaches it.

If you come among us, you have to be willing to endure with us, whether you like the legal department or not.

People want to use excuses, so let me now diverge for a moment.

I had the pleasure yesterday evening of being an early dinner guest, and then my wife was with me, then to attend a lecture on our excavations at Terca presented by the doctor and Mrs. Buccellati.

In introducing the presentation of the evening before the assembled group, who are representative of individuals of various professions in and out of education, in and out of businessmen and women, young and old, interested in archaeology, Dr. Giorgio Buccellati acknowledged, as it's appropriate, that the foundation that we know of as the ambassador foundation in Pasadena was responsible for the financial success of this year's expedition, as well as previously jointly with other institutions.

We wholly underwrote it this last year.

There were some, shall we call it, Oz in the audience, gasps, because they had undoubtedly read a number of local newspapers, heard the radio, but I'm saying this for a reason.

A man of professional standing is not embarrassed to acknowledge where the money came from.

It's not tainted money.

He didn't have to apologize, as some people in God's church do.

He has heard everything, as he said, he has watched the developments, and he is as convinced as he is from his own experience that human jealousy plays a major role in the way people behave toward each other, and he is the kind of person who would be willing to write to any institution or any person in defense of the good judgment that has been used in the way we have handled money with respect to international matters.

Now, if a person who is not of our fellowship, a person who was a friend before we were involved with money, lest some of you now misunderstand, because you know money is supposed to be what influences people, he was a friend for nearly a decade, I've known him for a decade before we were ever involved financially, where we never even thought of the Ambassador Foundation, who always appreciated what we stood for, because we also appreciated the quality of the character of the work that he and his wife are doing.

But here you have an individual who can stand up before a group of people whom he knows not in every case, and is not at all embarrassed, and yet I think we should consider this in terms of ourselves, that when we endure trials, it might even involve connections with individuals among ourselves that sometimes people want to be embarrassed over.

Just want you to think about what James is saying here, because there are people who don't endure a trial, who don't want to be associated with others who do.

Now James points out that sometimes we can make mistakes, and he will tell you here how you deal with problems, how you stay in the church with the right attitude.

Let us look briefly then at verse 22.

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Perhaps more than any other verse, here's the starting point now, that determines why some endure, and why some do not.

Why some are steadfast, why some are not.

We have young people who hear the word and are baptized, and finally they may be in the college in times past, they may be in the local church, some are older, some are younger.

They are hearers of the word that is written and spoken, but they are not necessarily doers, but anyone who hears but isn't a doer is deceiving himself.

We find this fundamentally in our marital problems.

That is, the reason for some of the divorces in the church is not because of porneia, not because of transgression of one of the Ten Commandments overtly, it is because you discover that when you married a person who was a hearer of the word, you did not discover that in private the person is not a doer of the word, who defraud you in marriage.

In the bulk of the problems I deal with involve fraud in, not transgression outside of, and it brings up the question as one woman said, well, when I married this man, I didn't marry him, like the scripture says, because I didn't know what the scripture says, that you were to submit to your husband as to the Lord.

I said, now that you have been baptized in our hearer, are you also a doer? That is, are you willing to do now what is asked of you? The answer was very plainly, no.

You want to know why some marriages crack up? Divorce is not the cause, divorce is the effect, and it is time we learn that.

We have too many who are focusing in on the result and are not getting it to cause the problems as to why people behave toward each other, why people behave this way toward the church, or to put it a little more intimately toward Christ himself.

If anyone is a hearer of the word, talks about what the scripture says, but does not do it, he is not a doer, that man or that woman is like one who observes his natural face in the mirror, and he goes away and forgets what he was like, but the other mate doesn't forget as they, that is, the man or the woman, have to live with this problem.

And I think we need to face up to this fact that we have a significant number of people.

The root problem is that they have heard they were not reared in some other religious confusion as some of you were, they have no prejudices against the truth, but they are not doers.

It's quite a different matter for somebody who hears and who has arguments and doubts and has to wrestle with those arguments and doubts before he makes a commitment.

Roderick Meredith mentioned years ago, when people were blowing out the church in 73 and 74 on the basis of questions they had never heard before, after being in the church for 20 years, he said, and I would say the same thing, we had to face those questions before we were ever baptized.

And there are people who don't face those questions until years later.

This is especially true of individuals who hear when they are young, the broadcast want to come to the college, come here, their parents either supported them, encouraged them, or didn't say anything or teach them otherwise about religion.

They were hearers, but are they doers? We have baptized a large number of hearers.

I will let the rest of the thought be unspoken and you decide whether you want to become a doer if you think you are only the hearer.

Repentance is not merely to open your ears to hear.

Repentance requires that you must do what you have learned.

Verse 25, he who looks into the perfect law, this law of liberty, which he later defines in chapter 2, especially in verse 11, summarizes it in verse 8, is the Ten Commandments, that is all the basic principles laid out in the law there given at Sinai, he who looks into this perfect law, not the law only as it is worded in Exodus 20.

This is the law that we see when we examine the Ten Commandments with all the rest of the Bible.

When we look in Matthew chapter 5, the commandment which said, you shall not kill, did not mean to exclude, you shall not hate.

This perfect law is the full intent and purpose for which the Ten Commandments were only simple words in Hebrew that did not convey all the possible thoughts that Jesus had to expound in brief upon in Matthew 5, and if he perseveres, being no hearer, that forgets, but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.

That's the end of verse 25.

We have many, many individuals, the bulk of problems that I face in dealing with individuals between parents and children, and I'm going to say something very plainly here because I think it's time we define some of these problems.

The question of interracial dating and marriage has arisen.

I am persuaded that in no small number of cases the problem is not with the young people but the attitude of the parents toward the children which drives young people in the direction that they sometimes go.

I have yet to discover a real grasp of proper motherhood and fatherhood when we have problems like this that arise or with drugs or alcoholism.

Most of the problems, I didn't say all, most of the problems of young people stem from parental failure, and when I bring the children and the parents together, I generally discover the source of the problem was not the boy or the girl.

It was the attitude of either a mother or a father toward the children, toward each other, or the problem of both toward the children and toward the world or toward the church.

I think we need to examine the causes.

We have too long in dealing with effects.

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain.

It is very important that if we think we belong to the church of God, if we think we are religious, we need to examine what it is that we are saying.

Whether it is in the family, in private, or in public, I had many, many people over the last year, maybe two years, who thought they were religious, who told me all sorts of things, and usually I am at the end of the gossip line, which I am very grateful most people don't bother with me, that sometimes, finally, people will come.

I asked often the simple question, how do you know this is true? Where is the source? If you heard that this happened in Paris or did you hear this happened in Tokyo or this happened in Jerusalem, you know, the way things are said, or this happened on the fourth floor at the Hall of Administration, who was there who saw it? This is what I asked.

Who was there? Where is the source of your information? I challenged, in one case, one of the men who no longer is here.

There was never any evidence that was forthcoming, only claims, no one ever showed me evidence, only heard words.

If we do think we are religious, we have need to bridle our tongue and anybody is deceiving himself who spreads rumors and gossip and that man's religion is vain, or woman's religion.

A woman that is pure and undefiled doesn't involve talking about other people's mistakes or what you heard about other people's mistakes or not, but concerns visiting orphans and widows in their affliction to keep oneself unstained from the world, which is much broader than most people think.

It's easy, perhaps, for some of us to visit orphans and widows.

They're nearby, they're in the church, we have at least a Sabbath to do it, but to keep unstained from the world is a very good expression and covers a very wide range because we don't realize how many media we allow to come into our home.

Let me drop down to verse 14 of chapter 2.

What does it profit my brethren if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? Here again we go back to the issue, your faith, your confidence, is it supported, faith in knowing that what you hear is right, is it supported by works that you're going to do? That is the question.

Let me read another verse here.

Some of you will say you have faith and I have works, show me your faith apart from your works, and I, by my works, will show you my faith.

You believe that God is one, you do well, that I acknowledge even the demons believe and shudder, that was said with tongue in cheek at the beginning of verse 19.

Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? What we learn here is that people too often who do not carry out what they hear, carry out what they believe, they best be defined as people of shallow mind.

That corresponds with the seed that was on the rock that didn't have any soil in which to take root.

We have shallow people whose spiritual depth is extremely limited because they are hearers but not actually doers.

Just as James discussed back here at the end of chapter 1, one who thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, James dwells on this subject again.

Now remember one of the big problems, the disturbed people, is what other people say.

Haven't you heard? The bulk of the people who have been under stress, who have called us to talk over wondering why they are still among us, should they remain? These are people who have been affected not by facts which they have been able to examine and to know, and we'll get to the question, even if there are facts, what do you do, with people who have only heard what other people have said.

No human being contained the tongue by himself, that's in verse 8, so restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men made in the likeness of God.

From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

My brethren, this ought not to be so.

James is most concerned if we are going to endure the test of faith that we don't spread with our tongue all sorts of poison.

What kind of poison can one spread? Verse 13, who is wise in understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom to know how to conduct oneself, which is the opposite of the kind of pride that we associate with vanity.

If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth and claim that you are what you're not.

Here we discover that some of the problems that the tongue expresses are bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

Now for most people, and I want to point this out, for most people this is not the problem, for most people the problem is talking about it.

There are two kinds of problems.

There is the man or the woman who may be bitterly jealous and have ambition, and then there is the man or the woman who talks about it.

Have you heard that so and so? Whether or not it is true is not the issue.

The point is we have to learn to govern the tongue and to quit spreading poison, whether the poison is a reality or otherwise.

In our midst without any question, there are those who spread rumors because there is jealousy over salary, over position.

There are people who have come and gone because of selfish ambition.

Wisdom is not such as comes, this kind of wisdom is not such as comes down from above.

There are people who think in the way they seek ambition that they're wise.

It's earthly and unspiritual and devilish, where jealousy and selfish ambition exist.

There will be disorder in every vile practice.

Now the wisdom from above is first pure, it's then peaceable.

It is gentle, it is open to reason, it is full of mercy and good fruits without uncertainty or insincerity.

We take just a brief look at this.

We could go into this in great detail, but we want to take a general view this evening and you can contemplate more deeply the time you have to read over it later.

Wisdom that comes from God that enables you to cope with the trial of faith is first pure.

That word probably is far more meaningful than most of us have really thought.

It involves clearly the absence of sin, that which is impure.

Then it involves the attitude of peaceableness and gentleness and the ability to be open to reason, to understand, cause and effect other people's problems.

It must be full of mercy and good fruits.

That is, so let's just take a look.

You can be merciful and it doesn't always bring good fruits because you can be tolerant of sin when sin needs to be disciplined.

The kind of wisdom from God demands good fruits as a result and mercy as a fundamental approach, but not softheadedness.

Now we have many individuals who, in using their tongues, didn't create peace.

We're not really open to reason.

The else of salary need not be a problem.

I can reason and understand why some salaries are what they are, and some of your salaries are what they are.

I'm using that because some people may make issues of that, as on the sixty minutes.

There's a reason why we compensate some people in some ways, and the reason we compensate others in other ways.

There's a reason the man earns the living and we don't pay the wife to do all the things at home.

We understand that a woman has a right to share equally in her husband's income, and we try to work these things out in our understanding, but society around us from the very beginning has understood that a man provides or brings the media of exchange, and a woman reaps the reward, but is not one who reaps the salary from her husband or her children because she works for them and with them.

The man shares with his family his wife and children what he earns from the outside, and so it is that in any institution we have individuals, most in terms of time and service and training, where there are differences, and so we must learn to be open to reason, not to be prejudiced.

Let me go on to some other things that are mentioned here.

In chapter 5, verse 9, do not grumble, brethren, one against another, do not grumble one against another.

This is the characteristic of the children of Israel and the wilderness.

I think we need to be very aware of how easy it is to do so today.

This again reflects attitudes, husbands and wives often grumble against each other, parents quite often against children, because they would like to be doing something else and not burden with them.

The child appreciates having been wanted.

No child can truly appreciate being born in the family and being unwanted or barely escaping being aborted.

It affects in the world, hopefully not among ourselves, a very large number of young people today.

So James has indeed addressed a significant area in looking at our problem.

And let us go on to Peter's comments.

In verse 13, we are dealing not with understanding James and Peter and John in terms of why they wrote the letter and everything in it, but following through some themes here.

Verse 13, chapter 1, verse 1 of Peter, gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you.

That's a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now what we have here is what Mr. Armstrong mentioned years ago, in having a goal.

Every successful person converted or otherwise has to have a goal as a primary orientation.

To gird up your minds means to put it in motion, you know, when you stood with the old garments they were loose, you couldn't run or go very fast.

To gird them up means to put them in a position where they are tied close against you so you can do things.

Gird up your minds means to put your minds in motion and to be sober, to know what it is that you're doing, to have full command of your thoughts, and to set your hope fully upon the grace coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ when he appears from heaven.

That means to focus your hope, your aspirations on what is promised in the Bible as distinct from all sorts of distractions in the world.

We unfortunately had people in 1975 who were not at all of permissive mindedness who had set their minds in some cases on jobs and money, and who used change as an excuse to leave instead of setting their minds upon the coming of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God.

Now as obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

We have too many who do not look upon their past as ignorance, but a see who calls you as holy be holy yourselves in all your conduct.

We have individuals who are very sure that other people are not holy in their conduct, but don't know that when they spread abroad all sorts of rumors, true or false, that their conduct is not holy either.

Now let us look at what our attitude ought to be toward one another, verse 22.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, so there is a matter of being obedient, of doing, submitting to what is revealed in Scripture.

You do this for a sincere love of the brethren, having purified your hearts by your obedience to the truth, for a sincere love of the brethren.

There is a fundamental approach to express sincerity and love and concern for others whether you agree with them or not.

There may be areas where we differ.

Paul recognizes this, and the Church Government is established to help bridge those gaps.

Love one another earnestly from the heart.

If we really love one another earnestly from the heart, we won't be saying or doing many of the things that afflict us.

Because most of our problems originated from among ourselves.

The world has little more than to clothe us.

We have individuals who want to know why some people have become what they are, why some wives and husbands have become what they are.

They have lost that love for each other that should earnestly come from what is here called one's heart or one's inner thinking and concerns.

It is when we lose this sincere love of others whether you agree with them or not.

That is very fundamental.

What God asks you to do, whether someone in the brotherhood is strict or someone seems to be permissive, we are not always permissive in all areas, we are not always strict in all areas.

But we need to learn to appreciate one another.

I think here is fair, there is this great failing, if we all set ourselves as the goal the hope which Christ makes available to us, we would be helping rather than hindering.

Now in all probability, this is the way it usually works out, the bulk of you who are here could have understood all this yourself, whether you heard what I am saying or not.

The majority who needed to hear, who have failed in these things, would not be here anyway, and that is the problem.

But of course, that is exactly why they have the problem, is that they have failed to play a role with one another.

I hope that we do have this approach to each other.

Put away, in chapter 2 verse 1, all malice and all guile, and insincerity, and envy, and all slander.

Some of you really have to shovel a lot out if you are going to get rid of all this.

Some can blow it away and it is all gone, and others are going to have to be dealing with the problem like a pyramid.

To put away all malice, that has to do with your intent, evil intent, to try to harm somebody or to get at somebody, and all guile.

Jesus said of one of the disciples that he was without guile.

That is a very important factor.

There are some people who say nice words.