

JAMES 1 EXTRA MATERIAL

Overview of James

James thought Jesus was insane. This quote by J. Vernon McGee is insightful:



J. Vernon McGee
1904-1988

If a man devotes his life to some noble, but earthly cause, he is applauded. The musician, the athlete, the business man, the artist, the statesman who gives himself to his work is recognized for his total devotion. But if a man gives himself in total dedication to the cause of God, he is branded as a fanatic.

Our society values personal freedom above all else. To do what I want, when I want with whomever I want.

Listen to what the great apostle Paul had to say about James:

But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Galatians 1:19

And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Galatians 2:9

Wisdom joyfully embraces trials (James 1:2-4, 12)

The grief we have in life is acknowledged in Scripture:

*Man who is born of a woman
is few of days and full of trouble.*
Job 14:1

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17

What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23

*For affliction does not come from the dust,
nor does trouble sprout from the ground,
but man is born to trouble
as the sparks fly upward.
Job 5:6-7*

Concerning God using trials to make us “completely perfect” (verse 4): James is telling us: Don’t ever “lower the bar” of the expectations that the Lord has for and wants to accomplish in His people. While we will never be God in all of His essence, it’s an amazing thought that through the trials of life we are being conformed to that which has no shadow of turning. His purpose for trials is to burn the spiritual junk out of us so that our fellowship with Christ would be deeper. And we see God doing this throughout Scripture.

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.”
Genesis 22:1

And then God told him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. God was purifying and refining Abraham’s faith.

And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

Deuteronomy 8:2

Here Moses was speaking about the 40 years of Israel’s wandering in the desert. It was to refine their faith and hope in God so that they would trust Him fully when they entered the land to conquer it.

A couple of other passages that speak of the Lord testing His people:

but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7

The word for *steadfastness* (verse 4) was used of a person who carried a heavy load for a long time. Just like the muscles gain *steadfastness* through resistance, so we learn *steadfastness* by going through trials.

Wisdom understands temptation (James 1:13-18)

In addition to what James says, the Lord has given us the means to overcome temptation:

(1) Trust in the strength of the Lord

Our souls are so corrupt and the lure of sin is so great that even as believers if we were left to ourselves none of us would ever be able to resist temptation. But the Lord has not left us as orphans, He Himself is the source of our power to resist.

Under this umbrella are two truths that we can rely on.

(a) Trust in the strength of His sovereignty

I have a theological quiz for you:

- Does God test us? Yes, He does. He tests us to see how deep our loyalty and commitment is to Christ.
- Does God tempt us? No, He doesn't. Temptation's purpose is to make us sin, and God cannot do that.
- Does God use temptation to test us? Yes, He does. Satan is the tempter, not God. Satan and all his demons are under the sovereign authority of the Lord and they can do only what the Lord allows them to do. His promise to us is that He will never allow the lure of temptation to exceed our ability to resist.

Temptation is under the sovereign control of the Lord. And we should find strength in this.

(b) Trust in the strength of His Spirit and Word

These two go together, they cannot be separated. A Spirit filled Christian is a Word filled Christian.

'Not by might nor by power (not by human might, not by human power) but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

In that great hymn of the faith, Martin Luther wrote in *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*:

If we in our own strength abide,
Our striving would be losing

The Word of God says:

*Your Word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.
Psalm 119:11*

A Spirit filled Christian, a Word filled Christian will still face temptation, but the combined strength of these forms a fortress wall that will protect us from the battering ram of temptation that Satan uses against us.

Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the Spirit of God, lean on the Word of God and when temptation comes knocking, we'll be able to resist from opening the door. How do we overcome temptation? Trust in the strength of the Lord.

(2) Live humbly before the Lord

We're in Proverbs for the moment, just look at how the contrast the Lord makes between the proud and the humble.

Proverbs 11:2
Proverbs 15:33
Proverbs 16:5
Proverbs 16:18-19
Proverbs 18:12

To overcome temptation, it is absolutely necessary for us to live humbly before Him. the prideful and arrogant are opposed by Him, but the humble are given grace.

How do we do this? Five ways.

(a) The humble will pray to the Lord

When we pray we're showing our dependence on Him rather than asserting our own independence. We're telling Him: "Lord, I can't handle this, I need Your help." And He loves it when we do this.

Remember the Lord's Prayer says?

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 6:13

"Lord, give me the strength to say 'no' to temptation so that I may not sin against You."

What do we do when temptation is staring us in the face? Tell the Lord about it and ask for His strength. That's what David did.

Psalms 141:8-10

The humble will pray to the Lord and ask for His help to overcome temptation.

(b) The humble will keep an alert and diligent watch

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking (watching for) someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8

Since Satan is constantly watching for opportunities to devour God's people, then we need to be constantly be aware of and watch for the snares he throws across our path. Our enemy out there is tricky, crafty, subtle and powerful. It's the proud one thinks lightly of Satan and may even make fun of him. But Christ Himself took Satan seriously.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.

Luke 22:31-32

And He prays this for us as well.

[Father] I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

John 17:15

The proud think that they don't have to concern themselves about Satan and have no need to be on the alert and watch out for him.

The disciples were with the Lord Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before His crucifixion. And when He discovered that they fell asleep He said:

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation.

Matthew 26:41

Don't go to sleep but keep a diligent watch over your soul.

So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober (watchful).

1 Thessalonians 5:6

*Watch over your heart with all diligence,
For from it flows the springs of life.
Proverbs 4:23*

The humble recognize that there is an enemy out there who's smarter, more powerful and more sly than us. And they will watch, be alert and be diligent to recognize when temptation and pray to the Lord for His strength to overcome.

(c) The humble will resist and flee temptation

Remember Joseph? He was sold as a slave to Potipher. Scripture says that he was a good looking man, and this wasn't lost on Mrs. Potipher. She lusted after Joseph and continually made advances on him to go to bed with her. He resisted. One day, Mrs. Potipher and Joseph were alone in the house.

*She caught him by his garment, saying,
"Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled."
Genesis 39:12*

*Flee from youthful lusts
2 Timothy 2:22*

*Abhor what is evil
Romans 12:19*

*Flee immorality
1 Corinthians 6:18*

Flee from idolatry
1 Corinthians 10:14

Do not give the devil an opportunity
Ephesians 4:27

Abstain from every form of evil
1 Thessalonians 5:22

Resist the devil
James 4:7

All these were all written to Christians. We don't play "here, kitty kitty" with a roaring lion whose intent is to devour us. We flee from him, we resist him.

Several years ago we got a puppy and brought him home. We bought him the collar and the dog dish and a couple of nice chew toys. But you know what? He didn't like his chew toys. He would have rather try to sneak off with a pair of socks and chew them up. Why? Because the socks are forbidden. And what's forbidden is alluring, enticing and attractive.

Sin is attractive. The things of Satan are alluring. But they're also forbidden. It's the fool who thinks that just because he has Jesus in his heart that's going to act like some lucky charm to ward off evil when he begins to play around with it.

Just one look at this porno magazine won't hurt.
Just one little hug with this man that's not my husband won't hurt.
Just attending a Mormon church service to see what it's all about won't hurt.

This is spiritual pride, spiritual arrogance, spiritual presumption, spiritual recklessness.

We cannot play around with the fires of hell without getting burned. As one has written: He that will play with Satan's bait, will quickly be taken with Satan's hook" (Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, 245).

The humble will recognize that although they are secure in Christ, temptation is still a very powerful and deadly enemy, and they will flee from it, resist it, stay away from it, and not do anything to flame the fires of evil desire.

(d) The humble will give thanks for overcoming

Psalm 119:1-8

When temptation is overcome, the humble will recognize that it was the Lord's strength and the

Lord's power and the Lord's involvement on our behalf that gave us the ability to prevail over sin. Oh Christian, when it happens be quick to give thanks.

This is how we overcome temptation. It may be difficult, it may be unpleasant, it may take every ounce of strength we have, it may stretch us to the limit. But these are the good gifts that the Lord has given His people to overcome our evil desire.

When a counterfeit faith encounters a trial and fails, the person doesn't learn joy or endurance. Rather they will try to justify what they did, lash out at others, blame others, and the end result will be embitterment, resentment, cynicism, unbelief, and they will eventually walk away from Christ.

When true and genuine faith encounters a trial and fails, like Peter, we will confess our sin, repent of it, ask and receive forgiveness from Christ, learn maturity from the failure, and continue to follow Christ.

Trials, tests, difficulties, hardships, problems, troubles. We all face them. But through them the Lord reveals to us who He is.

- (1) He loves His people so much that He gives us the ability and strength to rise above our circumstances so that we would live lives that are filled with joy.
- (2) He loves His people so much that He will bless for all eternity those who remain loyal and faithful to Him.

Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Wisdom embraces God's wisdom (1:5-8)

But he must ask in faith without any doubting. The verb *ask* here is a command. When we lack wisdom of what to do, the Lord commands us to ask Him in faith that He will, indeed, give us His wisdom.

Wisdom embraces our riches in Christ (1:9-11)

Our riches in Christ are seen in Jude 1-2:

In Christ we are...

- *called*

Not everyone is called. Before time began, when all that existed was the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, He called us to be His people. In the eternal past, God set His people apart and chose them to be His children. Out of all the billions who have ever lived, the Lord said that He wanted you, Christian, to spend eternity with Him.

- *beloved*

Those who are in Christ are the objects of the Father's love. When He looks at the believer, the Father sees His Son. The Father showers on those who are in Christ all the love and all the care that He has for His own Son.

- *kept*

In Christ we are protected by the mighty and powerful hand of the Father. This means we can rest in Him with the security that an infant has for his own parents. Being kept by the Father and Christ means that He has a plan for us. When Christ sets up His Kingdom, those who are in Christ will be there ruling with Him forever.

In Christ we have the Father's...

- *mercy*

Because of our rebellion against God, what we deserve is death and judgment. But in Christ, God does not give us what we deserve. He saves us from Himself and from the awful and terrible judgment He will bring on those who defy His rule.

- *peace*

In Christ our sins are forgiven and we have peace with the Father. In Christ there is no conflict between the holy God and us, the Cross of Christ has brought peace so that now we do not fear His wrath due to sin.

- *love*

In Christ, we are beloved children of the Father. Loved by Him with the same love He has for His own Son.

Wisdom understands temptation (James 1:13-18)

Why do some Christians commit fornication— pre-marital sex— and adultery? Why do some Christians lie, cheat, steal? Why are some Christians prideful and arrogant? Why are some Christians slothful and gluttonous? Why do some Christians gossip and slander? Why are some Christians guilty of idolatry, unbelief, selfishness, greed? We know these things are sin, and yet they are done by those who have true and genuine faith in Christ. Why? This passage in James forces us to look at ourselves and answer the question, but also give us the solution. True and genuine faith in Jesus Christ will help us overcome the temptations that we all face in life.

Why did the Lord have James write this verse (verse 13)? For the simple reason that we are prone to blame God for our sin. We may not be so crass about it, but we oftentimes do blame God for our sins in an offhanded way.

- “If only I had better parents then I would have turned into a drunk.” Well, gives us our parents?
- If only I had a better paying job then I wouldn’t have turned into a thief.”
- If only I had a better husband or wife then I wouldn’t have committed adultery.”
- “If only I had better looks then I wouldn’t be as mean to people.”

We also tend to blame other things for our sin:

- We blame poverty for the sin of stealing.
- We blame genetics for the sins of sexual perversion.
- We blame disease for the sin of alcoholism.
- We blame a person’s psychological state for the sin of murder.
- We blame a wife’s or husband’s inattention for the sin of adultery.

The word for *lured* (verse 14) is used only here in the New Testament, but *enticed* is used two other times. Speaking of the tactics of false teachers, Peter wrote concerning them:

They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

2 Peter 2:14

For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

2 Peter 2:18

For verse 17:

God is the overflowing source of all good.

Belgic Confession (1561)

The purpose of salvation is for us to be holy.

“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”

Leviticus 19:2

*And one called to another and said:
“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*
Isaiah 6:3

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

1 Peter 1:14-16

WISDOM EMBRACES THE WORD OF GOD

James 1:19-27

NOTE: I was on vacation when this passage was to be preached. Our Pastor of Leadership Development, Chad Knudson, preached this passage instead of me. An odd thing about preaching: Give ten pastors the same passage to preach from and there will be ten different sermons with ten different outlines. Chad did a masterful job with this passage and I received much encouragement from it (it can be heard by going to the church’s website at www.fremontefree.org). Yet, he presented it differently than what I was planning. Below are the sermon notes (only lightly edited) that I would have used.

One characteristic of wisdom literature is that it sees life for what it really is with all of its joys and sorrows, heartaches and delights. Those who desire to live godly and holy lives for Christ are caught in a crossfire. On the one hand we are called to live a life holy to the Lord and the true follower of Christ will desire to do this. But as we saw last week, we also know that the residue of the old sin nature lurks within us and is constantly calling us to abandon Christ and give in to a life of self-indulgence, sin, and death. We’re pressed from both sides, we’re caught in a battle of wills, and its at the very point that these wills clash that wisdom comes with its life-giving teaching as it tells us how to live and overcome the enemy within.

Last week we saw that one way we battle temptation and sin is for us to know that the Lord, through His will, saved our souls for His purposes.

Read James 1:18

The Lord gave us life through the *word of truth*. In our passage this morning, James, through the
James 1 extra *Page 11 of 23*

inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows us how this *word of truth* is to be at the center of our lives. The wise Christian will know that he or she has only two choices: either embrace, receive, and obey the Word of God for a life that is blessed with holiness, or shun and ignore the Word of God for a life that is cursed with sin.

Read James 1:19-27

I. Wisdom receives the Word of God (verses 19-22)

Read James 1:21

Receive with meekness the implanted word. When the Lord says *receive*, this is not a passive idea. It does not mean kicking back in the chair and seeing if Brooks or Knudson has anything important to say today. It doesn't mean reading the bulletin when the Word is being taught. It has the idea of grasping the Word, seizing the Word, laying hold of the Word. Those who receive the Word actively engage their hearts and minds when they approach the Word of God.

In these verses, James shows us five qualities that will characterize those who truly receive the Word.

(1) with open ears (verse 19)

Read James 1:19

Let every person be quick to hear. Attentive listening, active listening, alert listening. Taking notes and engaging the mind when the Word is being taught. It means to be a careful listener and not letting the mind drift to other things when the Word of God is being opened and proclaimed. Being *quick to hear* shows an eager desire to seize every opportunity to increase our exposure to the Word of God.

***The ear that listens to life-giving reproof
will dwell among the wise.
Proverbs 15:31***

The wise Christian knows that *life-giving reproof* is always there when God's Word is read, explained, taught, preached, and opened for counsel. The wise Christian will engage the Word of God with everything about him because he knows that eternal, life-giving truth is being proclaimed. Those who truly receive the Word, will open their ears to the truth; those who don't will close their ears.

Paul warned of this in 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears

they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Guard against this. Do not be deceived. As soon as we become bored with God's Word or think that it's not all that important in our lives or the life of our families, then we have closed our ears to the truth and are in grave danger of drifting off into theological la-la land which will bring nothing but despair and death. The wise Christ will know this and will consistently ask the Lord to give him a heart for His Word.

I know that what is taught in our SBS classes is sometimes hard. I know that proclaiming the Word from the pulpit sometimes offends and is not pleasant to hear. To tell you the truth, it offends me sometimes and I don't like hearing it myself because it convicts me. But never, ever, turn a deaf ear to the truth.

(2) with a shut mouth (verse 19)

Read James 1:19

Slow to speak. I can't tell you the number of times I've heard someone say: "Yes, I know the Bible says that, but . . ." It's that little word "but" and what follows that gets us into trouble. God's Word is authoritative. God's Word is the final word on matters of faith and practice. There is no arguing with the Word of God. What it says we are to do without fail.

Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today."

Deuteronomy 27:9-10

*For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.*

Psalm 62:1

*For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

Psalm 62:5

*But the LORD is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence before him.*

Habakkuk 2:20

Be silent before the Lord GOD!

*For the day of the LORD is near;
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice
and consecrated his guests.
Zephaniah 1:7*

This does not mean we cannot ask questions, or get clarifications, or ponder how to apply what the Scripture says. The attitude that the Lord wants from us is that we will not argue with Him by trying to find some loophole to get out of our obligation to obey what He says.

(3) with a teachable heart (verses 19-20)

Read James 1:19

Slow to anger. The *anger* spoken of here is not a quick burst but of something far worse.

anger: an inner, deep resentment that seethes and smolders

If you recall when we started the book of James, I said that James is an authoritative book and that all of us will probably be offended by something James wrote. When the Lord through His Word touches a raw nerve in our life because it is contrary to some opinion we hold or some sin we are indulging in or runs contrary to what we have been taught all our lives, then we will have one of two reactions.

When God's Word pierces the heart of a person who's teachable, they will ask: "What do I do? How do I fix this?" and ask the Lord to help them embrace and love His truth.

When God's Word pierces the heart of a person who's unteachable, there's anger and resentment that's usually that's usually directed toward the messenger. I've had people stomp out of my study, slam the phone down on me, yell in my face, question my motives, defame my character because God's Word pierced their heart and they didn't want to hear it. Ultimately their anger and hostility is against God Himself. As verse 20 states:

Read James 1:20

God's intent in our salvation is to make us holy and blameless before Him. If we become angry when His Word pricks our souls, then how can His righteousness be produced in us?

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

A sword will draw blood and the very nature of God's Word will draw blood as it confronts our

sins, our ungodly attitudes, and our false beliefs. And while we may not like it, it is necessary if we are to grow and mature in Christ. This is why the cry throughout the Scripture from God's people is for Him to teach.

*Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have gone astray.*
Job 6:24

*Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.*
Psalm 25:4-5

*Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.*
Psalm 27:11

*Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*
Psalm 51:6

*Teach me your way, O LORD,
that I may walk in your truth;
unite my heart to fear your name.*
Psalm 86:11

*Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes!*
Psalm 119:12

*Put false ways far from me
and graciously teach me your law!*
Psalm 119:29

*Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.*
Psalm 119:33

*The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes!*
Psalm 119:64

*Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.*

Psalm 119:66

*You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.*

Psalm 119:68

*Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.*

Psalm 119:135

*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!
Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!*

Psalm 143:10

There are many other places in Scripture where the people of God cry out to Him, “Teach me” because our hearts are foolish and we desperately need the God who saved our souls to teach us so that we may live wise lives in this foolish world. My brothers and sisters in Christ, never despise the teaching of God’s Word. Pray for a teachable heart that will receive and embrace the Word of God no matter how much it may hurt.

(4) with a holy desire (verse 21)

Read James 1:21

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness.

put away: to take off ones clothes, to lay aside, to rid oneself of

If we fell into a sewer or a septic tank or the lagoon at the Weitzenkamp’s, we wouldn’t keep those filthy, smelly clothes on. We would take them off, get rid of them, maybe even burn them.

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness. This verb and kind of language is used throughout the New Testament.

The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Romans 13:12

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

James 1 extra

Page 16 of 23

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

1 Peter 2:1

All of these were written to Christians, to those who name the name of Christ as their Lord and Savior. We are surrounded by *filthiness* and *wickedness* and the danger is that it will influence us and cling to us.

The wise Christian will approach the Word of God with the desire should let the sword have it's way in his life, asking the Lord to expose those things in his life that are hindering fellowship with Him, asking the Lord to search us through His Word and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit to expose any wicked way in us.

(5) with a humble spirit (verse 21)

Read James 1:21

And receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

meekness

- **humility**
- **not being overly impressed with our own importance**

God's Word is eternal and we are not; God's Word is absolutely pure and without stain and we are not. When we approach the Word of God, we are on holy ground and we are hearing the very thoughts and will of God. Meekness or humility is recognizing that my heart can be so easily deceived that I will ask, invite, and beg the Lord to search out my soul so that *filthiness* and *wickedness* will be burned out of me.

*Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.
Psalm 19:12-13*

*Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and my mind.
Psalm 26:2*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*
Psalm 139:23-24

Read James 1:21

James is picking up language from the Old Testament in this verse.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

This is what God has done. James calls it *the implanted word*, the Word that God has written on the hearts of His people so that He will be our God, and we His people, and *which is able to save our souls*. The *implanted word* saves our souls as we come to Christ but also as we live the Christian life. The wise Christian knows that this implanted word that is written on our hearts saves our souls from evil and wickedness and self-deception. This is why the wise Christian will receive the Word of God and ask the Lord to expose any way in him that is contrary to the Word.

This is what's necessary for us to truly receive the Word: listening with open ears and a shut mouth; approaching the Word with a teachable, humble heart that desires holiness.

But you know something? Even if we were absolutely perfect in all our motivations and desires in the things we have been talking about from verses 19-21, it would be useless and mean nothing. It's not enough. When the Word is taught or preached or meditated on, all we're doing is hearing it. Simply hearing the Word means nothing unless we put it into practice in our lives. This is where James takes us now.

II. Wisdom obeys the Word of God (verses 23-25)

Read James 1:22

The Lord says through James that we are to be quick to hear the Word, but we are not to stop at mere hearing it, we must do the Word and put it into practice in our lives otherwise we are simply self-deceived.

This is on the front of your sermon handout sheet:

Any response to the Word of God other than obedience is self-deception.

There are so many passages of Scripture that say the same thing.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Luke 6:46-49

Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”

John 14:23-24

“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

John 15:14

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 2:3-4

Knowing the Word, loving the Word, reading the Word, studying the Word, memorizing the Word, preaching or teaching the Word means absolutely nothing and proves nothing unless we obey it and put it into practice in our lives.

Someone may say: “I had a great devotional time this morning! I was able to read the Scripture for an hour straight with no interruptions.” James would say: “That’s great, well done. But are you obeying what you read? Did you change your mind about what is truly true? What sins did the Word expose that you are praying and trusting the Lord to help you overcome? What are you doing in light of the Word to love God more and hate the filthiness and wickedness of the world?”

Any response to the Word of God other than obedience is self-deception. James uses a ridiculous illustration to get his point across.

Read James 1:22-24

What would you think of a person who forgot what they looked like? We may not like the way we look. Whenever I see a picture of myself I think that it can’t be me because I think I’m better looking than that. We all recognize pictures of ourselves because we know what we look like.

It's not something that we forget.

James is saying that just as there is something terribly wrong with a person who forgets what he or she looks like, so there's something terribly wrong with a believer in Christ who hears the Word, is convicted by the Word, but forgets it and fails to respond to it in obedience.

Desiring to be holy or humble or teachable is not enough and means nothing. It's absolutely necessary that we are doers of the Word by actually being holy and humble and teachable.

Read James 1:25

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty.

looks: to bend over; to carefully examine and investigate

This verb was used when Peter and John ran to the empty tomb of Jesus and bent over to carefully examine the empty grave clothes.

Notice how James has described the Word of God:

THE WORD

- **the word of truth (verse 18)**
- **the implanted word (verse 21)**
- **the perfect law (verse 25)**
- **the law of liberty (verse 25)**

The Bible, the Scripture, the Word of God is His truth which He implants into our souls. It will never steer us wrong because it is perfect and as a result it saves our souls because obeying it gives us liberty and freedom from sin and death.

And perseveres. This isn't just a flash in the pan obedience or pulling the Word down in times of trouble. This refers to a habit of life, the habit of obeying.

Being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts. He doesn't forget or ignore what God's Word says but puts it into practice.

He will be blessed in his doing.

***Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;***

*but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*
Psalm 1:1-2

*Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good,
and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.*
Proverbs 16:20

As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

Luke 11:27-28

By all means, listen, hear, read the Scripture, but also do what it says. And God promises to bless. The last couple of verses contain three areas of life that act like a plumb line to check ourselves against to see how well our profession of faith is measuring up to our practice of faith. If we are truly obeying the Word, then we should see these three practical, obvious practices in our lives.

Areas of obedience (verses 26-27)

- **godly speech (verse 26)**

Interesting that he begins with the mouth, our words. This is the first of three passages that James talks about our speech.

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.
Matthew 15:18-19

A man or woman may profess Christ, they may read their Bible regularly, but if their speech is full of cynicism, hatred, slander, gossip, if they have hardly any good thing to say but are characterized by letting people know what they don't like, James says that their profession of Christ is nothing more than mere religion that is *worthless*.

Worthless

- **of no use, empty, fruitless, powerless, lacking truth**
- **the word was used to describe**
 - **idols (Acts 14:5)**
 - **worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:20)**
 - **our faith if Christ not resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:17)**

- **teachings of false teachers (Titus 3:9)**
- **our life before Christ (1 Peter 1:18)**

Someone who is a mere hearer of the word and not a doer will be characterized by useless, empty, fruitless, powerless words that lack truth. But someone who is a doer of the Word will have words characterized by gentleness, grace, words that encourage, words that heal, words that uplift Christ and holiness, words that are substantial and full of the truth of God's Word.

- **godly love (verse 27)**

Read James 1:27

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.

Those who are consistent doers of the Word will be characterized by godly love to others. He uses the specific example of widows and orphans who were helpless and most vulnerable to be exploited. There were no orphanages, no insurance policies, no social security. Orphans and widows were dependant on the generosity of others for their very survival.

How we treat those whom we consider “beneath us” is an indicator of how much we truly are doers of the Word. Some in our church are very intelligent and highly educated—how do you treat those who are not up to your academic levels? Some in this church have a lot of money—how do you view those who are not as financially well off?

Jesus said:

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:35

What does my treatment of my fellow church member, my wife, my husband, my children, my co-workers, my non-Christian acquaintances reveal about my faith and commitment to Christ?

- **godly living (verse 27)**

And to keep oneself unstained from the world.

I had been a Christian for a year or two. And one day in the college library I was studying with some other guys that I had a lot of classes with. Someone came up to the table and said, “Hey I just heard this great dirty joke, anyone mind if I tell it?” One of the fellows at the table said something like, “Go ahead, no one here would mind.” That got to me. I'm a Christian, I'm a follower of Christ. What did this guy see in me— or maybe better yet, not see in me— that

would make him say such a thing? This was one of those decisive moments in my Christian life. I'd been trying to have it both ways, and that's impossible.

The purpose and theme of the entire book of James could be summed up in this one phrase: *to keep oneself unstained from the world*. The verb *to keep* here refers to a continual keeping, the habit of keeping ourselves from the influences of those things that are contrary to Christ and His Word.

This issue here is not sinless perfection but the direction of our lives. What characterizes us? Are we self-deceived and self-deluded hearers of the Word or are we blessed doers of the Word? It's one or the other and there is no in between.

God takes His Word seriously. He's given it to us so that we can know Him and live wisely for Him in this foolish world. James is a practical book. It's a book where the theological rubber hits the road of life. Those who truly and genuinely have faith in Christ will embrace His Word and live accordingly.

***Thus says the LORD:
"Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?
All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.
But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word.
Isaiah 66:1-2***