

## Counseling James

### Testing for Geuine Paith by Embracing the Word

James 1:21-25

Key Words: faith, change, Bible, Word

Reading (James 1:18-25)

#### Introduction

A. Saved by the Word of God (James 1:18, 21)

B. The Word of God frames James 1:19-20.

1. Be a good listener (to the Word and others)

a. Listening is an art that is difficult to master, for it means to take an intense interest in the person who is speaking. Listening is the art of closing one's mouth and opening one's ears and heart.

Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of James and the Epistles of John* (Vol. 14, pp. 56–57). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

2. Be slow to speak (teach) the Word and careful in our speech to others.

a. Matthew 12:36–37

3. Unrighteous anger is the result of not submitting to what God says in His Word about anger.

a. Proverbs 14:29

I. First Things First (vs 21)

A. "Putting Aside"

1. Command to put aside or "get rid of"

a. Word picture given that mens to get rid of old clothes and it's common in the New Testament

(1) that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness

of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Eph. 4:22-24, NASB)

(2) 4:22 lay aside. To strip away, as in taking off old, filthy clothes. This describes repentance from sin and submission to God at the point of salvation. MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2006).

(3) Put aside, lay aside is a metaphor for the stripping away of sinful patterns and attitudes.

(4) Paul and James are saying the same thing-that is, a call for us to make a definite change in life style.

(5) Remember that a genuine faith is an observable faith.

(6) It's also probable given the context James is being specific and is referring to immoral, filthy speech.

(a) 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph 4:29).

## B. "Filthiness" (moral filth, vs 21)

### 1. Dirt

a. moral filth means your life is not clean before the Lord.

b. There is sin in your life meaning your life has sinful patterns.

(1) Habitual (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10)

### 2. All" means every instance of filthiness

a. Be comprehensive in the laying aside of sin

(1) Respectable Sins by Jerry Bridges

(2) "Big" sins, "little sins" have to be fought because our entire lives since the day we were born again are bound up in God's Word

(a) All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be

adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:16–17, NASB)

b. God's expectation is that we fight sin and that we make progress.  
(Progressive Sanctification)

(1) Jesus died for our entire being; therefore God wants all of us.

(2) For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Ro 6:14, NASB)

(3) All the remnant filthiness (that remains from the past life) can only be removed by heeding the Word.

C. "Wickedness" (evil)

1. Unclean, impure

2. Basic idea is that there is a lot (abundance) of wickedness in their lives and all of it has to go.

3. This is a significant slam. James is never reluctant to say the hard things.

II. Now Welcome the Word (vs 21)

A. "Humbly"

1. Means "in humility"

a. It means how to accept the Word of God

b. It speaks of an inner attitude in the inner person—the heart

2. The attitude is in contrast to the attitude in vs 19-20

a. Instead of reacting in anger they are to humbly accept the Word regardless of how sharp it is.

b. If anger is your default position it means that your new default position is to become docile, easily bent and directed by the Word.

(1) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12, NASB).

(2) The Word of God certainly brings comfort but it also brings conviction as it pierces the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

(3) it requires humility to accept the Word when it points out what is wrong with us! Pride is the obvious enemy of humility

3. Humility is a rare item in humanity yet it is abundantly clear it is a trait that God values greatly.

(a) But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (Jas 4:6, NASB)

#### B. "Receive"

1. There is a sense of urgency when James uses the word "receive" or "accept."

2. What is required here of the "hearer" is to make a decisive decision about the Word.

a. Will I accept the Word whole heartily?

b. Or, let me think about it?

c. We must decide in strip off filthiness and wickedness and decide to be humble.

(1) Humility is an inner quality of the heart but if it is not actionable it's not really humility.

(2) Stop fighting the Word, resisting the Word and instead seek to make it an active force in transformation.

3. Be ready to receive the Word by being an active listener.

a. Bring your Bible to church

b. Take notes to stay active in listening

c. Be prepared to discuss in CGs.

d. Listen with an ear toward application.

#### 4. Be hungry for the Word!

##### C. “Implanted”

1. The Word must be implanted by God because it is not native to our hearts.

2. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. Ja. 1:18

a. The Word is the vehicle in which we were saved.

(1) The Word is already in our hearts.

(2) Now the idea becomes as we strip away sin we are to welcome the Word so the Word grows in us.

(a) Psa. 19:7-11

(b) Psa. 119:105

b. How many sermons and CG meetings?

(1) Word intake does not equal Word application

c. Ja. 1:18 is in reference to the initial act of salvation but here in vs 21 James is viewing the Word in its ultimate sense of future salvation when we go to be with the Lord.

(1) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Php 2:12–13, NASB)

(2) For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Co 1:18, NASB)

#### III. Now, Obey the Word (vs 22)

—you’ve been saved by the Word (vs 18)

—you need to listen to Word carefully (vs 19-20)

—you need to put off moral filth and wickedness (vs 21)

—you need to welcome the Word with a humble heart (vs 21)

—you need to do what the Word says (vs 22)

A. Genuine Faith manifests itself through habitual obedience to the Word of God

1. Continual process (keep on being a doer)

2. The idea is that the character and lifestyle of a genuine believer is regulated by God's Word.

a. Observable, actionable, habitual

(1) Think of the person whose communication patterns are governed by the Word.

(2) Think of the person whose job or calling is governed by biblical principles.

(3) Think of the person who can control their temper because they grasp what Scripture has to say about unrighteous anger.

(4) Think of the person you know who manifests Christ consistently.

(5) If God's Word is transformational, and it is, then it should become obvious, observable and habitual. It's part of what it means to mature in Christ.

b. Contrasted with merely hearing

(1) "merely" illustrates that hearing is right and proper but "merely" the first step before acting upon it

(2) If we "merely" hear but fail to act we are "deluding ourselves."

3. Deluding means to be self-deceived

a. James's point about being self-deceived

b. He means to say you believe you are saved but there is no proof to the claim

(1) The delusion is continual.

(2) The delusion comes from a person's own false reasoning or rationalization.

c. It adds up to tricking yourself

#### IV. The Character of the Hearer only (vs 23-24)

##### A. The man who looks (speaks of intensity)

1. The person is a careful looker
2. They are careful when they look so they understand what they see.
3. When they walk away from the mirror they forget what they have seen.

a. "immediately" means what they saw in the mirror made no lasting impact

##### b. Idols of the heart interference

(1) Idols of the heart are all the things that capture the heart and hold its attention.

(2) The Word of God does not have first place in the heart so something else does.

##### B. The character of the hearer then is...

1. They look at themselves, go away and then forgets.
2. They hear, even understand, but it's only for a moment.
3. What is understood is discarded

C. "The sluggard buries his head in the dish, and will not even bring it back to his mouth." (Pro. 19:24)

1. The person is a spiritual sluggard.
2. It is powerful imagery of a person who merely listens, but does not do what the Bible says.
3. As others observe the pattern they wonder if the person's faith is genuine.

a. Matt. 7:26 comparison

##### D. Doer Verses

1. 1 John 2:3-4

2. 1 John 3:10

3. 2 Pe 1:10

#### V. Six Qualities of Character of the Doer (vs 25)

##### A. Serious student

1. "looks intently"

2. indicates a stooping down and looking into or at something or leaning forward to look intently with intensity

3. eagerness is in view

(a) companion verse to 19 where we learned we are to be eager for God's Word.

##### B. The Bible is Preeminent in the Person's Life

1. "at the perfect law of liberty"

a. "at" means into and indicates a penetrating examination -in other words a serious student of the Word

b. "law" here does not refer to the Mosaic law; it refers to the law that is binding on the believer-the Scriptures.

c. It is best to see the word "perfect" as complete, in that it embodies the perfect revelation of God and Jesus Christ.

2. The Word is of such a nature that it gives us liberty, or freedom.

a. To be a doer of the Word should not be a heavy task for the believer.

b. It should be joyful and natural.

##### C. The Person is Consistently in the Word

1. does go to the Word only when times are rough

2. The person is captivated by the Word so it's consistent

#### D. The Doer Obeys the Word

1. The hearing of the Word affects a person at the level of actions.
2. The doer obeys what the Word says and is not like the hearer who forgets what they have just heard.
3. The genuine believer is marked by a persistent, consistent submission to what they hear.

#### E. The Doer of the Word is Worthy of Imitation

1. James is holding up the doer for all to see.
2. It would be like being in a crowd and James yanking out one person and saying “be like that guy.”
3. To be a person who obeys what he hears is an enviable thing and worthy of imitation

#### F. The Doer is Blessed

1. God expects obedience and he blesses it.
2. Fear of Obedience
3. Psalm 19 referring to the Word

#### Prayer

#### Psalm 19:7–11 (NASB95)

- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
- 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.
- 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;  
In keeping them there is great reward.

