

James 1:21-27
“How to apply and share the word of God”

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I. Introduction

This section of James letter started with the phrase, “*So then*” which told his readers that what he is about to express is an **action based upon what he has previously written.**

The topic of which was the “*Believers maturity*” which can only accomplish through three things all of which we must “endure:

- A. Trials
- B. Temptations

And as this section says they will need to “continue in” the Word of God. With trials being something that happen to us and temptation something that we are to avoid James mentions the one thing believers can do to facilitate spiritual growth in our lives we can make sure we maintain the proper “spiritual diet” upon the Word of God. The outline James shared with his readers was three ways the maturing believer can digest God’s word in their life:

1. Vs. 19-21 How they **HEAR** it
2. Vs. 22-25 How they **APPLY** it
3. Vs. 26-27 How they **SHARE** it

James started in verses 19-20 with the “*personal qualities*” necessary for maturity of being: “Swift to hear”, “Slow to speak” and “slow to wrath” which is how we will be able to “*receive with meekness the implanted word*” verse 21.

II. Vs. 21-25 How to apply the word of God

Vs. 21 Having dealt with the triple “personal qualities” to receiving the word of God James issues a two-part command to receive the word of God from an agriculture illustration of.

1. “***Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness***”: The first part of this command is negative as James says that an unwillingness to listen is connected to a sinful tongue and an unrighteous anger. If we reverse James exhortation and become “***Slow to Hear, Quick to Speak and Quick to Wrath***” then moral filth is the outcome of our actions. So, if we desire to mature, we need to reverse this trend and do some spiritual house cleaning. ***A closed Bible belongs to a closed heart which is characterized by filthiness and an overflow of wickedness!*** James is saying that before you plant in the soil of the garden of your heart the seed of the Word of God you may need to pull some weeds out. It is foolish to try to plant the Word of God in your heart if it is covered in the weeds of the flesh and the world!
2. “***And receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls***”: The second part of this command is positive. First, we learn something that God’s Word is not native to our hearts as in needs to be “***implanted***” and as stated above in “soil” that has been cleared of the weeds. Then it needs to be “***received with meekness***” which suggests both ***humility and teach-ability***. To hear God’s Word suggests that when we read it, listen to is that we will accept it, and obey it so that we will be transformed by it especially if it challenges us! Our

“*Point of View*” can be weeds that need to be removed as what we desire is the truth of His point of view! We have already personally witnessed that such acceptance has saved our souls so why stop being teachable now?

III. Vs. 22-25 How to apply the word of God

Vs. 22-25 Now James deals with the second aspect of maturing through the Word of God and that is how they are to apply it. We learn a very valuable truth with regards to the Word of God and that is that it is NOT ENOUGH to be a good listener it is not hearing alone but DOING that is the indication that you have listened to the Word of God.

Marking your Bibles is never as good as being MARKED by your bible! Hearing the Word of God is not the sign of maturity but doing the Word of God is! To illustrate this for us James compares the Word of God too that of a mirror. There were three understandings mentioned here that James’ readers would have understood with regards to a mirror:

1. Vs. 23 **Examination**: “*If anyone is a hearer of the Word of God and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror..*” The main understanding of a mirror in that time was that it led to personal reflection or “**Examination**” so that the person would be able to clearly see what they truly looked like. **There is no way to cover what you are in a mirror, no way to excuse what you see reflected back at you.** **The doer of the word isn’t looking to negate the purpose of the mirror; they don’t have taped over the glass or polished service a picture of what they imagine themselves to look like.** A hearer of the word may acknowledge the truth but not want the examination of

the reflection. *They are content with the truth so long as they see others reflection not their own.* They don't want to see the heart of the face that they now possess. To do so will reveal through the perfection of the word that we are the worst sinners we have ever met. *Such examination will reveal that there is far more imperfection than perfection, as we are gazing into the perfection and Mirror of God's Word, and as such we are seeing His reflection.* Ah, but such an examination we reveal what He is working on in us through the Word of God and the Spirit of God which is making us into His image from glory to glory!

2. Vs. 24 **Evaluation**: *“for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”* The second aspect familiar to those that would have read this was that a mirror was for **“Evaluation”** and based upon James words, to evaluate ourselves a “quick glance” won't be satisfactory. ***A superficial reading of the Bible, a little daily devotion that serves only as an inspiration and not transformation will not do.*** This kind of bible reading leads to personal forgetfulness. It's like an x-ray without the object of the body to be examined. ***When we are truly in the Word of God, we should be moved in some direction but never to stay as we are!*** Isaiah described his encounter with God's word 6:5 saying, *“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.”* Peter said it this way in Luke 5:8, when he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”* Saint's remember, hearing is never the same

as doing.

3. Vs. 25 **Execution**: “*But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*” The third aspect of looking in a mirror is “**Execution**”. There is no substitute for accomplishing the task that caused us to look in the mirror in the first place. This requires time, attention and devotion. The blessing comes about in the “DOING” as we seek to practice the word of God. **The glance into the mirror of the Word of God moves to a gaze and continues until the word of God has accomplished its purpose.** James calls the word of God the “*perfect law of liberty*” because it sets us FREE when we obey it by His Spirit.

IV. Vs. 26-27 How to share the word of God

Vs. 26-27 The final aspect of what the Word of God should do in the life of the believer is to cause them to want to SHARE it with others. Notice that James uses the words “**religious**” in verse 26 and “**religion**” in verse 27. These words are only used five times in the entire New Testament and elsewhere it is translated into the word “*worship*.” James **isn’t** referring to the outward practice of ceremonies or special days instead the idea behind the word is means “**practicing God’s Word, sharing it and living it before others through your speech, service and separation from the world system**”. You will see that James identifies **three ways in which the “doer of the word of God” will share.**

1. Vs. 26 **Speech**: “*If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless*”. When James brings the need to share the Word of God, his first words about communication

- has to do with “*bridling the tongue*”. He compares the tongue and our speech to a powerful horse off to a wild ride where the reins are not taught, and the 1500-pound animal is at full gallop and unstoppable. **There is nothing remotely religious about a mouth that just roars and is unyielding!** In fact, James says, that it is worthless as far as communicating the world of God is concerned. **The true test of a person’s faith is NOT in the volume or passion in which they speak but rather in their ability to harness what they are passionate about in such a way that enables a person to listen to the truth!** There are a lot of things that can come out of an unbridled tongue, hate, filth, gossip and lies! More truth is communicated out of what a person **DOESN’T** say than what they **DO** say.
2. Vs. 27a **Service**: “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble*”. **Seeing Jesus in the mirror of the Word of God will cause us to see the needs of others as well.** Orphans and widows were the two most helpless groups in Jewish society as their needs were always desperate. James is saying that, **any form of communication that is not associated with action towards the needs of others is not communication.** No person who is hearing God can ignore the cries of the needy says James. Furthermore, such action will require is to do more than throw money and instead will say “**here am I send me**”! Remember, **the finest worship we can offer God is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice.**
3. Vs. 27b **Separation**: “*and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*” The final way we share God’s word is equally visible as we aren’t polluted by the world system in the way we live. We live in a world that ever seeks to redefine words

and meanings: Society calls the killing of the unborn children “**Pro-choice**” and says that it supports “Women’s rights” while failing to realize that over half the children that would have been born would have been women, so how does this “choice” support women rights? The world defines sexual promiscuity as loving and gay and we see the prophecy of Isaiah being fulfilled a “*evil is called good and good evil; light is called darkness and darkness is called light.*” We are being called to purity and to keep ourselves unspotted by the world system. We may be in the world, but we are never to be of the world. Never underestimate the power of the word seen in a life that is both separate from the world and separate to God.