

**JAMES 1:19-27**  
**OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 1 as we continue our study through this letter that James wrote to Jewish believers who were scattered from their homes due to the persecution they were facing because of their faith in Jesus.

And as we have seen and will continue to see, James is calling his reader to maturity and commitment. In other words, live what you say you believe!

We said that James chapter 1 deals with ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING*** and that should just make sense since these believers fled their homes, their families, they left everything because of the persecution they were suffering!

And thus, James starts out dealing with accepting these trials that have come their way with joy. And the reason they could do that was because the Lord was in control and God was using these trials to help them to grow in the faith, to be more like Christ!

And James wants them to understand that as they are going through these tough times, these heavy trials, that God would give them the wisdom they need to see them through, to help them in what they should say and what they should do as they go through them.

The problem comes when we are “**double-minded**” or we lack faith and thus, our lives end up like a roller-coaster with all the ups and downs. James wanted their lives to be steady and the Holy Spirit wants our lives to be steady.

Not that we will not have trials, we will, but through them our faith will not be shaken, we will not be moved!

And James wants them to resist temptation because the Devil will try to tempt them every chance he gets. God brings a trial in our lives and the Devil is right there to tempt us to sin!

God wants to lift us up, He wants our faith to grow, He wants us to mature; and Satan wants to bring us down, destroy our faith, destroy our witness! Be wise and don't be tempted but allow God to test your faith so that you can grow!

And James wants them to understand that God does not tempt them, the Devil does. There is no darkness in God, none at all. It is not part of His nature.

And as much as the Devil can tempt us, we do not have to give into that temptation. But James makes it clear that we are responsible to giving in to these temptations that the Devil puts before us and it only leads to death, that is what is born out of giving in to sin!

James put it like this, “**But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**” James 1:14-16.

Remember, James wants them to grow, to mature. And mature believers will embrace the testing of their faith and resist the temptation to sin, while the carnal Christian will resist the testing of their faith and give in to the temptation on a regular basis. I am not saying that mature Christians won't stumble, they will, but it is not a normal practice of their faith, while the carnal Christian, this is how they live out their faith, giving in to temptation!

And as we closed last time we read in James 1:18, “**Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**”

And if you think about it, the rest of this chapter gives practical instructions as to how we, as the firstfruits of God's new creation, can properly represent and glorify Him in this world.

I have called this study, “***Obedience to the Word!***” because that is what should be seen in our lives.

We are to walk according to what the Word of God says to us and not what the world is saying, not what we are saying, but what He is saying, the Lord! And we saw that in James 1:18 as James speaks of God bringing **“us forth by the word of truth.”** He not only brings us forth, but He continues working in our lives, maturing us, according to the word of truth – ***THE BIBLE!***

And yet, the trend of people actually believing the Bible is the Word of God is decreasing at alarming rates. And, because of that you see that everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes, and that is not a good thing. God has told us what is right and what is wrong, but many don't believe it anymore!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

***Fewer than one in four Americans (24%) now believe the Bible is “the actual word of God, and is to be taken literally, word for word,” similar to the 26% who view it as “a book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man.” This is the first time in Gallup’s four-decade trend that biblical literalism has not surpassed biblical skepticism.*** Meanwhile, about half of Americans - a proportion largely unchanged over the years - fall in the middle, saying the Bible is the inspired word of God but that not all of it should be taken literally.

From the mid-1970s through 1984, close to 40% of Americans considered the Bible the literal word of God, but this has been declining ever since, along with a shrinking percentage of self-identified Christians in the U.S. Meanwhile, the percentage defining the Bible as mere stories has doubled, with much of that change occurring in the past three years. . . .

Over the past three decades, Americans’ view of the Bible as the literal word of God has been declining, while their view that the Bible is a collection of fables, myths and history recorded by man has been increasing. ***The shift is most pronounced among young adults, indicating the trend is likely to accelerate in the years ahead.***

Americans in all age groups still largely accept the Bible as a holy document, but most of these downplay God’s direct role in it. That could mean people are more willing than in the past to believe it is open to interpretation - if man, not God, wrote the Bible, more can be questioned.

And that, in turn, may have consequences for where Americans come down on a number of morally tinged issues. The country may already be seeing this in growing public acceptance of a variety of behaviors that were once largely frowned on from a Christian perspective - ranging from gay marriage and premarital sex to out-of-wedlock births and physician-assisted suicide.

- <https://goo.gl/kdaqbC>

Make no mistake about it. The way we view the Bible will be manifested in our actions, our words, what we truly believe. And it will affect our morality because, instead of living according to what God has said in His Word, we are adapting our behavior to fit in with the changing world views. And, we have seen the evidence for that and it is not a good thing!

And I think for many, they have lost the perspective of what we hold in our hands, the Word of God, the Bible, given to us by God. Let me put this into perspective for you just in case some of you are losing your faith in what God has said.

We are told,

Let’s pretend that you work for me. In fact, you are my executive assistant in a company that is growing rapidly. I’m the owner and I’m interested in expanding overseas. To pull this off, I make plans to travel abroad and stay there until the new branch office gets established. I make all the arrangements to take my family in the move to Europe for six to eight months, and I leave

you in charge of the busy stateside organization. I tell you that I will write you regularly and give you direction and instructions.

I leave and you stay. Months pass. A flow of letters are mailed from Europe and received by you at the national headquarters. I spell out all my expectations. Finally, I return. Soon after my arrival I drive down to the office. I am stunned! Grass and weeds have grown up high. A few windows along the street are broken. I walk into the receptionist's room and she is doing her nails, chewing gum, and listening to her favorite disco station. I look around and notice the waste baskets are overflowing, the carpet hasn't been vacuumed for weeks, and nobody seems concerned that the owner has returned. I ask about your whereabouts and someone in the crowded lounge area points down the hall and yells, "I think he's down there." Disturbed, I move in that direction and bump into you as you are finishing a chess game with our sales manager. I ask you to step into my office (which has been temporarily turned into a television room for watching afternoon soap operas).

"What in the world is going on, man?"

"What do ya' mean . . ."

"Well, look at this place! Didn't you get any of my letters?"

"Letters? Oh, yeah – sure, got every one of them. As a matter of fact . . . we have had *letter study* every Friday night since you left. We have even divided all the personnel into small groups and discussed many of the things you wrote. Some of those things were really interesting. You'll be pleased to know that a few of us have actually committed to memory some of your sentences and paragraphs. One or two memorized an entire letter or two! Great stuff in those letters!"

"Okay, okay – you got my letters, you studied them and meditated on them, discussed and even memorized them. ***BUT WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT THEM?***"

"Do? Uh – we didn't *do* anything about them"

- Charles R. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*, pp. 170-171

Remember what the Lord told Joshua as Moses has died and Joshua was going to be leading the children of Israel into the Promise Land. In Joshua 1:6-9 we are told, "**Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**"

Make no mistake about it. Our Christian life is not only knowing what God's Word says but doing what God's Word says! And James is going to make that same point as he tells us in James 1:22, "**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**"

Thus, as we will see this morning, if we are going to profit from God's Word, we must not only accept it, but we must do it!

I have broken down these verses here in James chapter 1 like this:

***ACCEPTING THE WORD*** – JAMES 1:19-22

***THE WRONG EXAMPLE*** – JAMES 1:23-24

***THE RIGHT EXAMPLE*** – JAMES 1:25

***THE EVIDENCE*** – JAMES 1:26-27

So, with that said, let's begin reading in James chapter 1, beginning in verse 19 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word and we look at this topic of ***OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD!***

**JAMES 1**  
**VERSES 19-22**

James is firing on all cylinders here. He wants these believers to understand the importance of what he is saying so they not only take it to heart, but they learn from it and apply it to their lives!

And remember, our focus here in James 1:19-22 is ***ACCEPTING THE WORD!*** In other words, we are to take the Word of God and learn from it and then apply it to our lives. If you do not believe something you will store it as useless information, but it will do nothing in regard to how you live out your faith. It is worthless to you because you don't accept it as truth!

But we don't have that option. Well, I guess we do but if we negate the Word of God then we are truly fools and it does not change the fact that this is the Word of God.

Remember what Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17, **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

Notice that God's Word is profitable for our lives. Now, if there was some truth in the Bible, would that be profitable to us? Absolutely not because we would not know what truth was and what was not truth. We would have to decide and maybe we would get it right, but maybe not!

But God's Word ***IS TRUTH!*** We don't have to guess and, we do not get to pick and choose what we like and what we don't like, what we think is truth and what we think is not truth. That is not an option for us because, as Jesus said, **"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."**

Now keep in mind that James is writing to Jewish Christians and they did not have the New Testament yet. And maybe James is saying to them, ***"Hang in there. Listen to what these teachers are saying even though they may go against the traditions you once held. Be swift to hear what they are saying and slow to speak! Don't get mad at them, but listen and see what the Scriptures, the Old Testament is saying because the words spoken will not contradict what the Word of God is saying."***

I think we can see that played out and even today people struggle with traditions that they hold onto that are not in the Word of God. And many times, people get mad and they say things that they should not say.

Slow to speak, listen to what is being spoken. Someone said, "You have two ears and one mouth that is guarded by teach. Listen and keep the gates closed!"

And let's look at this in a broader sense, because that applies as well. What is the natural response when we face difficult times?

We don't listen, we lash out at people, we pour out our wrath on the person giving them what we think they deserve. God tells us to slow down, to listen to His voice, to His direction because as you do the words that flow from your mouth will be words that bring forth life and not destruction!

Someone has said, “Billions and billions of words are produced every second, but only a fraction is truly heard.” How true that is.

Adlai Stevenson said, as he addressed the students at Princeton, “I understand I am here to speak and you are here to listen. Let’s hope we both finish at the same time.” I like that, may that be the case here this morning.

And this should just make sense. There is no way we are going to be slow to wrath if we refuse to listen. We will lash out at people. The only solution is to be swift to hear, slow to speak and then, what will flow from our lives is that we will be slow to wrath!

And when you think about it, much of our anger and wrath comes from being self-centered and not others-centered. Swift to hear is a way to be others-centered. Slow to speak is a way to be others-centered.

I like the way that J. A. Motyer put it as he wrote, “We might wonder why the ever-practical James does not proceed to outline schemes of daily Bible reading or the like, for surely these are the ways in which we offer a willing ear to the voice of God. But he does not help us in this way. Rather, he goes deeper, for there is little point in schemes and times if we have not got an attentive spirit. It is possible to be unfailing regular in Bible reading, but to achieve no more than to have moved the book-mark forward: this is reading unrelated to an attentive spirit. The word is read but not heard. On the other hand, if we can develop an attentive spirit, this will spur us to create those conditions – a proper method in Bible-reading, a discipline of time, and so on – by which the spirit will find itself satisfied in hearing the Word of God.” How true that is!

Solomon put it like this as he said in Proverbs 10:19, “**In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.**”

Then, in Proverbs 13:3 we are told, “**He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.**”

And in Proverbs 16:32 we are told, “**He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.**”

Proverbs 16:32 is an interesting one. Solomon is saying that it is easier to conquer a city than it is to control your own spirit, the words and actions that flow from your heart. If you can control your temper you are a greater hero than a military conqueror, and thus, that is why it is more difficult to control than in conquering a city!

“Peter the Great, although one of the mightiest of the Czars of Russia, failed here. In a fit of temper he struck his gardener, and a few days afterwards the gardener died. ‘Alas,’ said Peter, sadly, ‘I have conquered other nations, but I have not been able to conquer myself.’”

The only way to win this battle is through surrender. I know, that sounds strange, but until you surrender your will to God you will never be able to control your anger! If you refuse, then people are not going to see the righteousness of God in your life, but your own righteousness, which are like filthy rags! It will not be pretty, and I am sure we have all experienced this in our own lives before!

Very wise words we need to apply to our lives. First, listen to what God is telling you and then listen to what God is telling you through others, you can learn a lot about yourself that way!

And for the person who has surrendered to God, who obeys His Word, James tells us in James 1:21, “**Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**”

In other words, “*Since you have surrendered to God then put away all that filthiness, that wickedness, and let God’s Word take root in your life!*”

And again, this should just make sense. When a heart is not purified (through salvation) and kept pure daily (through ongoing sanctification) - the filth that is in it (Jer.17:9) will overflow, like a clogged septic tank, into our outward lives, in the polluted filthiness of what our fallen nature says and does through us. You see, the purity of God's word can preserve us even in an impure age.

Therefore, don't listen to the lies of the Devil but put aside, cast off the filthiness by letting God's Word bring you to saving faith and then keep you clean or sanctify you as you walk with Him.

You see, the purity of God's Word will preserve us in an evil world. David put it this way in Psalm 119:9-11, "**How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.**"

Think about spring time and planting the seeds in the ground. What do you have to do before you plant the seeds? You have to prepare the soil, prepare the ground!

Listen to what John tells us in I John 1:9, "**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" Prepare your heart by repenting of your sins and asking God the Father to forgive you!

Then, in Jeremiah 4:3 we are told, "**For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: 'Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns.'**" In other words, as you meditate upon the Word of God, ask the Lord to keep your heart soft and open to what He wants to show you. And if there is any hard ground that the Lord would break it up, so the seeds can take root and grow. We can mature in the faith!

And finally, as James tells us here, we must have an attitude of "**meekness**" as the seeds of God's Word take root in our lives, so they may grow, and the fruit can be produced in our lives!

Spurgeon put it like this, "The first thing, then, is *receive*. That word 'receive' is a very instructive gospel word; it is the door through which God's grace enters to us. We are not saved by working, but by receiving; not by what we give to God, but by what God gives to us, and we receive from him."

The power of God working with the Word of God to transform our lives! But we must allow God to work and produce this fruit in our lives. We must learn to surrender to Him!

And in James 1:22 he sums this up for us. He tells us that if we accept the Word of God in our lives, if we let the seeds of God's Word grow in our lives, then we must "**be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**" How true that is!

Please understand that in the ancient world many loved to hear what a teacher had to say, they loved information. But that is all meaningless if you don't apply to your life what you hear.

You see, if you heard a teacher and followed his ways you would be called a disciple. That is what God wants us to be, disciples, not just hearers of His Word but doers!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27, "**Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.**"

We must not only accept the Word of God in our lives but then we must apply the Word of God to our lives. We must live what we say we believe, not for salvation, but for our identification with the Lord!

Listen to what one writer had to say about the Word of God and what needs to happen. He wrote, "A teacher or preacher may give an eloquent address on the gospel, or explain ably some O. T. prophecy about Christ, but when the sermon is done, it is not done; something remains to be done by the hearers in life, and if they content themselves with sentimental admiration or with enjoying the emotional or mental treat, they need not imagine that this is religion." (Moffatt)

Exactly, it must take root in our lives. We must mediate upon it and allow it to grow!  
**ACCEPTING THE WORD!**

### VERSES 23-24

Now James gives to us **THE WRONG EXAMPLE** of living out your faith. What you are not to do. And it is important to know what we are not to do so that we don't do it!

Now this should just make sense to us. If you only hear God's Word without doing anything about it, then it is just as foolish as the person who looks in the mirror and sees the flaws and does nothing about it. You know, their hair is a mess, they have broccoli in their teeth and yet, nothing is done to fix the problems, to change the filthiness you might say!

All that information he received by looking in the mirror did not do any good in his life and that is the same for the person who reads God's Word, who hears God's Word and then does not do anything about it.

And remember, James is writing to immature Christians wanting them to grow and he wants them to see the foolishness of this kind of behavior. The Word exposes their sin, but they don't see it, they don't want to see it, they think they are doing okay and thus, there are no changes made to their lives.

What happens many times is they see the problems of others and yet, they walk away unchanged by God!

Let me let you in on a little secret. You are all sinners, myself included. Thus, we are to allow God's Word to remind us who we are, sinners saved by grace and apart from God we can do nothing.

We are not to just admire the image we see but allow God's Word to cause us to do something about it, to be conformed to His image not ours!

And think about it, what good is a mirror if you see that there is cake on the side of your face and then do nothing about it?

You see, it is of no value and the same is true with God's Word, if you don't do what God is calling you to do, then it is of no value to you!

Make no mistake about it, the mirror does not lie. We may lie to ourselves on how good we look, but the mirror shows all our imperfections. Let me explain. There is . . .

A story from the last century [that] tells how a missionary out in the bush had hung a small mirror on a tree in order to shave. The local witch doctor happened by and curiously looked into the strange glass – and seeing her hideously painted features she jumped back! Immediately she began to bargain with the missionary for the mirror.

The man demurred [objected], but to no effect. Finally, realizing that the witch doctor would not be put off, he let her have the mirror - whereupon she threw it to the ground, breaking

it to pieces, shouting, “There . . . it won’t be making ugly faces at me anymore!” We too have ways to deal with a mirror’s truth, and our false ways don’t work either.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith that Works, p. 73

Now we may laugh at that and think that is foolish, but how many times do we do the same? We don’t break the mirror, but we may move away from God’s Word, we may make excuses for not agreeing with God’s Word, and there are all kinds of ways that we can remove ourselves from what we really need, the Word of God applied to our lives. You see, it shows us who we are and what we need to do. And as you allow the Word of God with the Spirit of God to work in your life, He will transform your life!

Spurgeon sums it up like this and how true his words are. He wrote, “Certain preachers dream that it is their business to paint pretty pictures: but it is not so. We are not to design and sketch, but simply to give the reflection of truth. We are to hold up the mirror to nature in a moral and spiritual sense, and let men see themselves therein. We have not even to make the mirror, but only to hold it up. The thoughts of God, and not our own thoughts, are to be set before our hearers’ minds; and these discover a man to himself. The Word of the Lord is a revealer of secrets: it shows a man his life, his thoughts, his heart, his inmost self.”

As a pastor, I am to shine the light of God’s Word, like a mirror upon you so that the Holy Spirit can show you what you need to do in your life.

This is not about condemnation but restoration and building ourselves up in the faith.

For the carnal Christian, the immature Christian, they don’t want to look, or they refuse to change and that is not good.

***THE WRONG EXAMPLE!***

### **VERSE 25**

Now we are going to be looking at ***THE RIGHT EXAMPLE*** or how we are to live out our faith!

Here we see that the mature Christian loves to come to church and hear God’s Word, not just for information, but for transformation. The Word of God is changing him and that is what it is supposed to do but we can harden our hearts to what the Holy Spirit is showing us. Be careful!

Listen again to what James says about what a mature Christian is about, he is one “**. . . 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.**” James 1:25.

Did you see that? What James is saying is that the mature Christian looks in a mirror, the mirror of God’s Word, and when he sees that something needs to change in his life, he does not forget about it, but he does something about it! Exactly!

And in the ancient Greek language, the word for “**looks into**” is speaking of a penetrating examination! It was not just a glance, but a deep look, an intense look, a look that penetrates to the heart of the matter! It also speaks of a person who will “stoop down” in order to have a good look, to look intently into, not just a casual glance, like I have said!

As we study God’s Word we are to apply it to our lives and it is not just a quick glance and then we move on. But we search the Scriptures and let them affect our lives by the power of God’s Spirit! We need to ***LOOK INTO GOD’S WORD!***

Listen to what Adam Clarke has to say in regard to the Greek word that is translated “**continues.**” He says that this word speaks of the person who “Takes time to see and examine the state of his soul, the grace of his God, the extent of his duty, and the height of the promised



glory. The metaphor here is taken from those females who spend much time at their glass, in order that they may decorate themselves to the greatest advantage, and not leave one hair, or the smallest ornament, out of its place.” Exactly!

Now, before anyone freaks out on this phrase, “**the perfect law of liberty**” let me explain. This is speaking of the Word of God. It is speaking of the New Covenant and as God reveals His Law to us, it is the “**law of liberty**” that is written upon our transformed hearts by the Spirit of God and not upon stone!

Paul put it like this in Hebrews 10:16-18, “**“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,’ then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.”**”

In Ezekiel 36:26-27 we are told, “**“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”**”

Let me make this simple, because it really is simple. The perfect law of liberty is salvation by grace through faith and in that we have the Holy Spirit coming inside of us and giving us the freedom or liberty from self-effort, which is the Old Testament Law, to change us by working from within us according to His glorious power! Don’t lose sight of that.

In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul wrote, “**“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**”

Notice that we are being changed, transformed not by the Law but “**by the Spirit of the Lord.**” Again, the Law can’t save us, it can’t change us, it can only show us how far short we come to what God requires, and that is perfection.

William MacDonald put it like this, “To [the serious, mature Christian] . . . the Bible is the perfect law of liberty. Its precepts are not burdensome. They tell him to do exactly what his new nature loves to do. As he obeys, he finds true freedom from human traditions and carnal reasonings. The truth makes him free. This is the man who benefits from the Bible. He does not forget what he has read. Rather he seeks to live it out in daily practice. His simple childlike obedience brings incalculable blessing to his soul. This one will be blessed in what he does.”

Also, Poole gives us this insight as he tells us, “The whole doctrine of Scripture, or especially the gospel, called a *law*, Romans 3:27, both as it is a rule, and by reason of the power it hath over the heart; and a *law of liberty*, because it shows the way to the best liberty, freedom from sin, the bondage of the ceremonial law, the rigour of the moral, and from the wrath of God.”

Let me also say this in regard to looking into the mirror of God’s Word, because, as we do, we see Jesus.

“In His classic allegory Pilgrim’s Progress, Puritan preacher and writer John Bunyan describes the magnificent mirror that the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains showed to Christiana and Mercy: ‘Now the glass was one of a thousand. It would present a man, one way with his own features exactly; and turn it but another way, and it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of pilgrims Himself. Yea, I have talked with those that can tell, and have said they have seen the very crown of thorns upon His head by looking into this glass; they have therein also seen the holes in His hands, in His feet, and His side. The man who continues looking into the mirror of God’s Word sees in it things far more wonderful than his own face.

He sees not only his filthy garments, not only the spots and stains on his life; he sees in it Christ, the Christ of the thorn-crowned brow, the Christ of the Cross, his Saviour, whose blood cleanses him from all sin.' Bunyan's point is that, when a person honestly and humbly looks into the Word of God, he will see two things - his own sin and the sinless Savior and Lord. When such a person sees and responds to Christ and then lives out the Word he is blessed in the doing."

- John MacArthur

Thus, ***THE RIGHT EXAMPLE*** of what should be done in our life is simple, **"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."** James 1:25. ***THE RIGHT EXAMPLE!***

### **VERSES 26-27**

The last point we will be looking at this morning is ***THE EVIDENCE*** of our faith, how are we walking, what is being manifested in our lives. Is there enough evidence to show that you are a Christian by the way you live, by the things you say?

Remember that James just explained that real religion is not shown by hearing the word, but by doing it.

And now James gives to us examples of what it means to be a doer of the Word, how we live out our faith. You see, religion is not shown by hearing the Word of God, but by doing it and doing it with a right heart!

And when you look at the New Testament, this word, **"religion"** is never used in a positive sense, but always a negative one.

In fact, it always implies religious works and rituals that people think will make them righteous in God's eyes.

In Colossians 2:20-23 Paul put it like this, **"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – 'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."**

So, what James is saying here and what Paul said in Colossians, "This seems to reflect upon the hypocritical Jews, whose religion consisted so much in external observances, and keeping themselves from ceremonial defilements, when yet they were sullied with so many moral ones, James 1:14; Matthew 23:23; John 18:28; devoured widows' houses." (Poole)

James starts out with controlling the tongue and he will deal with that much more in chapter 3 and so will we.

But if you can't control your tongue then your faith is empty, it does not translate into the way you live, the way you treat others.

Think about this for a minute. It has been estimated that the average person will speak some 18,000 words in a day, enough for a fifty-four-page book.

In a year that amounts to sixty-six 800-page volumes! Up to one-fifth of the average person's life is spent talking! I know, you are thinking, "Wow, I am sure Pastor Joe is way past that number!" Okay, I get that.

But think about it. No wonder it is so hard to control the tongue! May we be slow to speak and quick to hear what God is saying to us and how we respond to others!

And this should just make sense. Anyone who uses their tongue to rip others apart and destroy reputations and then goes to church and thinks their religious affiliation makes them right with God - James says they've totally deceived themselves and their "**religion**" is worthless.

The next point that James makes is our actions. He is saying that if you are walking with God you will desire to help those in need.

"But what about me?"

The focus is not self, but others and I know this for a fact because I have experienced this in my own life.

The more I am exhausted, and I have to then minister to someone, if I am obedient, the Lord takes care of the rest. If I am not, I am even more tired!

You see, James is not speaking of religious rituals here, but a right kind of living. If God is on the throne of your life, if His Spirit is guiding you, then you will have the nature of Jesus flow through your life!

Remember the story of Lot? Lot is an example of a person who didn't keep himself unspotted. He saw the beauty of Sodom and he coveted the land of Sodom and then he took it for himself and yet we are told in Genesis 13:13, "**But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.**" That is where Lot had placed himself and his family!

And the progression of Lot is seen as he saw Sodom, he pitched his tent towards Sodom and before long he was sitting at the gate of Sodom, an elder of the city.

And Peter tells us of this man in II Peter 2:7-8, "**and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds).**"

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, "**And He rescued righteous Lot, greatly worn out and distressed by the wanton ways of the ungodly and lawless - [Gen 19:16,29.] For that just man, living [there] among them, tortured his righteous soul every day with what he saw and heard of [their] unlawful and wicked deeds.**"

You see, the end result is that Lot lost everything and was saved as the angels had to drag him out of the city before the Lord brought His judgment upon Sodom and the surrounding cities for their wickedness.

Lot lived such a contradictory life-style that when he tried to tell his son in laws of the coming judgment of God they laughed at him and mocked him, and they were destroyed in the judgment!

Make no mistake about it, God desires us to be obedient to His Word and that is then reflected in our actions, the things that we do.

God desires to give us good gifts from above, don't settle on the evil that is from below.

Let the Word of God enlighten by the Spirit of God cause us to walk accordingly! **THE EVIDENCE** for our faith is what people are looking for, they are watching us!

Remember our opening story of the head of the business going to Europe to start up his business there and leaving someone in charge here to run the business. And the boss would send letters letting him know all he was to do. And when he came back from Europe the place was a mess.

All the letters that were sent, what happened to them? Remember what we were told,

"Letters? Oh, yeah – sure, got every one of them. As a matter of fact . . . we have had **letter study** every Friday night since you left. We have even divided all the personnel into small

groups and discussed many of the things you wrote. Some of those things were really interesting. You'll be pleased to know that a few of us have actually committed to memory some of your sentences and paragraphs. One or two memorized an entire letter or two! Great stuff in those letters!"

"Okay, okay – you got my letters, you studied them and meditated on them, discussed and even memorized them. ***BUT WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT THEM?***"

"Do? Uh – we didn't ***do*** anything about them"

- Charles R. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*, pp. 171

May we not answer that way, but may we be ***OBEDIENT TO THE WORD*** – live what we say we believe because we love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! True faith is ***SEEN!***