



“MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL”

James 1:21-25

James identifies himself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We talked about being scattered, and how in such a time as this we truly need the practical wisdom from the Book of James

Then James covers how to count it all joy, when we encounter various trials and that Faith is the #1 target..... the #1 target for God to work on in our lives and the #1 target for Satan to destroy

Then we learned that the result of the testing of your Faith is to produce endurance (patience)

And that process of producing patience or endurance will mature you in your walk with the Lord

Then we covered if we need wisdom during our hardships that God encourages us to ask Him because He Generously gives wisdom, when you ask, and He never resents giving it to us!

Then we learned HOW to Ask!

To ask in Faith with no-doubting or as James calls it ."Double Minded"

Faith always has to have an object

Then we talked about how God views your wealth

And your unique position and opportunities of either being poor or wealthy.

Then we talked about temptations and how God doesn't deserve any blame for that.....

We learned.....

- 1) There is a blessing for enduring trials and Temptations
- 2) There is an author of our temptations, and God didn't do it
- 3) There is an instigator of our temptations, and it's not God
- 4) There is a harsh consequence for falling to our temptations

James has spent the first part of this chapter thoroughly equipping us to face hardships with a great attitude and a load of Faith.....

So...Then we learned from James that every good thing, and every perfect gift comes from God

Then we learned that salvation was a supernatural event that God Brings us forth as a child being born, by His Word and Truth to be a kind of person that others will see our fruit and desire this same salvation

Then last week we talked about being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to Anger.

So did you work on that this week ? or did you just say, yeah that's good, but I'm ok the way I am.....

Well we're going to talk about that kind of thinking today..

The kind of thinking that says, yeah! I'm ok the way that I am.....

Satan wants you to think that way, he wants to keep you independent of Gods Word.....

He surely don't want you to be quick to hear the word.

So today our txt is

James 1:21 Therefore, ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

25 But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

In 1937 Walt Disney produced the "Snow White" movie in which there was a magic mirror, that had the ability to look at all people and decide who was the most beautiful in the land....

Now I don't know and really don't believe that Walt used this section of scripture to illustrate the power of a mirror, but I do know that this scripture today may bring the power of God's Word into focus today!

We start off in our txt today with verse 21

Therefore, ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

As you know the word "Therefore" is a connecting word to the previous verses...

When you see Therefore, look back and find out what it is there for....

I think you can go back to verse 18 where James talks about Gods supernatural ability to bring about a new Birth in Christ through the Word and Truth so we will be a "kind" of person the whole world will look at and say,"now that's different "

Also looking back at the thought of the power of Hearing Gods Word, listening intently and holding on to our tongue and our anger

So Therefore, James will tell us some things that should be a result of the new birth in Christ.

Therefore, ridding yourselves of all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

All filthiness and all that remains (overflow) of wickedness: This has in mind an impure manner of living.

KJV says...superfluity of naughtiness,
In light of the nature of temptation and the goodness of God, we are to lay aside all (ridding yourselves) impurity, putting them far from us.

Apothithemi (ah-pah-thith-ee-me) to take it off, lay it aside

James written around 50AD....Corinthians written around 62AD

Paul said something similar to the Corinthians in
2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let's cleanse ourselves from all defilement (filthiness) of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

So the conclusion from the last verses is that we are to get rid of or laying aside all moral filth and evil that is prevalent in our lives....

(overflow) of wickedness: This has in mind an impure manner of living.

KJV says...superfluity of naughtiness,

James said check it out, see what needs to be removed then lay it aside

The word is commonly used for the removal of clothing....so take the dirty clothes off because you don't need them anymore, you're a child of the King
Get rid of any trace of the old life, take it off

Ephesians 4:22-23

22 that, in reference to your former way of life, you are to rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,
23 and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

Colossians 3:8 But now you also, rid yourselves of all of them: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene speech from your mouth.

James is commanding that his readers, "get rid" apothithemi of the moral filth...any defilement or impurity

This word for moral filth is also represented in the OT
Joshua the High Priest had filthy clothes that were replaced with clean new clothes, representing the removal of sin from his life.

Zechariah 3:1-4

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right to accuse him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log snatched from the fire?"

3 Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments and was standing before the angel.

4 And he responded and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you and will clothe you with festive robes."

The word refers to dirt, grimy filthy clothes, but spiritually refers to dirt that soils our soul, so it is that moral decay hinders our ability to grow in Christ. James said to lay aside anything that will bring moral decay AND..... and all that remains (overflow) of wickedness(evil)

The wickedness here refers to malice (desire to cause pain) evil intentions, and any ill will toward others.

Did you notice that it calls it an overflow?

So, there's more than we should have even in a normal setting

If you're setting here this more morning and wondering if you got any of this, the probability is really high that you do.

This phrase "all that remains" indicates that there is an overflowing of it... This evil is excessive and prevalent and plentifully abundant

James is telling us to get rid of these things, and we do that by confession, repentance, and intentionally obeying God's Word

Doesn't it just make sense if these things are active in our lives then we're going to have a hard time of hearing God?

I mean really now, if there is moral impurity in our lives and evil thoughts how are we going to just snap our fingers and get into the God mode?

So what James is doing is giving us the picture of exchanging one thing for another....

Sinful behavior is being replaced with the Word of God!

So....Take off the dirty, filthy, garments you don't need them anymore, and put on the new garments bought and cleansed by the Lord Jesus

A follower of Christ can't carry around garbage and effectively serve Christ...

What did James say he was?
A bond servant!

So once you get rid of that stuff then.....

..... in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.: In contrast to an impure manner of living, we should receive the implanted word of God (doing it.... in humility, a teachable heart).

Humility is a word that means...humble and it denotes the idea of strength under control that enables a person to accept the hardships that comes into one's life and remain even tempered and stable

This word is able to save us, both in our current situation and eternally.

The purity of God's word can preserve us even in an impure age.

"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." (Spurgeon)

Here James alluded to the spiritual power of the word of God.

When it is implanted in the human heart, it is able to save your souls. The word of God carries the power of God.

Implanted is reminiscent of the parable of the sower and the seed.

Matthew 13:18-23

18 "Listen then to the parable of the sower.

19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown with seed beside the road.

20 "The one sown with seed on the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he falls away.

22 "And the one sown with seed among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

23 "But the one sown with seed on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times as much."

it is able to save your souls.

The word save here has a very broad meaning...

....it can mean the initial saving of your soul at conversion

....it can mean the act of sanctification, where it helps us grow in our maturity as a Christian

Romans 6:19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented the parts of your body as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your body's parts as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

....it can mean our ultimate glorification, of a heavenly home

So, what James says next is the pivotal point of this sermon....

It is all about your willingness to surrender to the Word or your unwillingness to be like James, who said he was a slave to Christ

...you decide, no one else, your individual path, not a group thing, how do you look at YOUR responsibility to God? Are you willing to not only hear but put it into action?

What James is saying is that it is inconsistent with God's Word for a person to be JUST a hearer, a person who hears must respond, and James is encouraging us to do something about what we've heard.

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.

Because if you are just a hearer, and don't do anything about what you've heard you are living in a deceived mindset

I asked at the beginning, did you work on what you heard last weekto be quick to listen...slow to speak...slow to anger....

Did you work on it?

To prove means that what you are saying is the way it really truly is!

We must receive God's word as doers, not merely hearers.

To take comfort in the fact you have heard God's word when you haven't done it is to deceive yourself.

You can sit and listen all day long, but if it don't affect the way you live then you're fooling yourself!

It was common in the ancient world for people to hear a teacher. If you followed the teacher and tried to live what he said, you were called a disciple of that teacher.

We may say that what Jesus is looking for is disciples: doers, not mere hearers. Jesus used this same point to conclude His great Sermon on the Mount.

He said that the one who heard the word without doing it was like a man who built his house on the sand, but the one who heard God's word and did it was like a man whose house was built on a rock.

The one who both heard and did God's word could withstand the inevitable storms of life and the judgment of eternity (Matthew 7:24-27).

You're not saved by the doing, but you do learn by the activity.

Illustration when I was learning to fly a plane I had to go to ground school and learn from a book how to fly.....well when I finished ground school and passed the federal exam it still didn't mean that I could fly, I knew all the terminology, I had my head full of wonderful information, but I still could fly that plane, I learned to fly when I sat down in the seat of that plane cranked it up, taxied it to the runway and took off flew around awhile and brought it back and landed on the runway!

James is saying it's not enough to just be one who hears the word...we must sit in seat, crank it up and learn from experience.

"I fear we have many such in all congregations; admiring hearers, affectionate hearers, attached hearers, but all the while unblest hearers, because they are not doers of the word." (Spurgeon)

Spurgeon just said unblest hearers, we'll touch on that point later, but what I want you to see now is that even though we might know what scripture says if we aren't following it then we ARE DECEIVED!!!

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.

Not only are we deceived, but look who is the perpetrator of the deception!
You are!!!

Self-deception is the worst, because we talk ourselves into it.

We justify and rationalize the decisions to not be the doer of the Word.

Hey and guess what we seldom disagree with us.

Most of the time we disagree with someone else or maybe even with God, but generally as a rule we're pretty soft on our own opinions, are we?

To be self-deceived we are living out our truth, even though the real truth is right in front of us...

self-deception can arise from, for example, selective attention, biased information search, or forgetting. ...

Self-deception is a motivated and conscious false belief held simultaneously with a conflicting unconscious true belief.

I'm alright with living like this even though the Word of God says different.....
Say Amen, or Ohhh me!

James is saying to prove yourself to be a doer of the word.

To prove means that what you are saying and living is the way it really truly is and should be....

So, prove you are a doer of the Word, don't just talk the talk of Christianity, but hey church walk the walk!!

Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.

I told you this was a pivotal verse, James is getting down right personal right here, he's getting all up in our business, he's not satisfied with just telling you how we ought to live, But he's standing at the door watching to see if ya doing what he said

He said PROVE it!

Illustration I talked to a young couple one time needing some financial help, they first told how good of Christians they were and how much they loved God, then they shared their hardship...they had sixty dollars to their name left, so they did what they knew to do, they bought sixty dollars worth of lottery tickets with it...

What about buying some milk for the baby and getting on your knees and saying to God, I've heard that you will supply all my needs according to your riches in glory, and I'm going to trust you to be my source, my strength, my help and Prove I've heard you right

It's time people quit being so sensitive about somebody hurting their feelings, and getting mad when someone don't agree with their truth, and their opinion and start looking to the real truth, God's word and start finding out what it says and follow it and Prove it

Cause if you don't Prove it here is what James says....

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

25 But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer

He is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself, and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was:

James uses a tremendous illustration here, by talking about a mirror....mirror, mirror on the wall

...what can you see in me?

...what can you expose about me?

...what do I see in me?

The person who only hears God's word without doing it has the same viewpoint as a man who looks into a mirror and immediately forgets what he saw.

He is like a man who looks at himself in the mirror and walks away forgetting what he looks like

The information he received did not do any good in his life.

...who looks at his natural face:

The ancient Greek word translated looks at has the idea of a careful scrutiny. When you scrutinize yourself in the mirror of God's Word and it shows you things that need to be tightened up or changed...don't ignore that!

So, when you look at yourself in a mirror, you fix yourself up! You comb your hair, ladies you touch up your makeup, you don't just walk away

By application, James had in mind people who give a careful scrutiny of God's word; they may be regarded as Bible experts but it still doesn't result in doing.

"The glass of the Word is not like our ordinary looking-glass, which merely shows us our external features; but, according to the Greek of our text, the man sees in it 'the face of his birth'; that is, the face of his nature. He that reads and hears the Word may see not only his actions there, but his motives, his desires, his inward condition." (Spurgeon)

The power of God's word gives us a glimpse of what's going on in us, ...when we see it, you can see that yes, we may be doing life God's way, ...or we may see that there are areas that need to be attended to and if you walk away with NO regard to the Word then we are just hearers!!

Understanding this power of the Word of God, the preacher is responsible for working hard to not hinder this power.

"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." (Spurgeon)

A healthy person looks in the mirror to do something, not just to admire the image.

Even so, a healthy Christian looks into God's Word to do something about it, not just to store up facts that he will not put to use by being a doer of the word.

24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

...looked at himself ...to intently study

...gone away...to go away, depart

1. to go away in order to follow any one, go after him, to follow his party, follow him as a leader

...immediately...shortly, took no time to reflect

...forgotten....to forget

neglecting, no longer caring for

forgotten, given over to oblivion, i.e. uncared for

...what kind of person...the kind that in verse 18 says

18 In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

...kind here in verse 24 is different because we're seeing ourself different

We look into the mirror and don't see and sometimes don't even want to see what God sees in us.

We lessen the image in the mirror

In verse 18 you are the first of a special kind in verse 24 we have lessened the value of us by not even recognizing the kind we really are in the eyes of God...

That my friends is exactly what Satan wants for you....

To not see all that God says, but to live in a life full of deception!

It gives us the idea that to depart from the place of examining yourself, you are ok with what you see, so therefore you'll walk away to follow your own desires.

25 But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

I love this word, "but"

Oh, how God can turn a bad situation into good.

Here we are looking into the mirror, mirror on the wall

But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does:

If we study the Word of God intently, and do it (continue in it), then we will be blessed.

who has looked intently at the perfect law of freedom: In the ancient Greek language, the word for looked intently spoke of a penetrating examination, so that a person would even bend over to get a better look.

Though James stressed doing, he did not neglect studying God's Word either. We should look into God's Word.

Adam Clarke points out that the ancient Greek word translated continued is *parameinas* and has this sense:

"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."

The perfect law of freedom: This is a wonderful way to describe the Word of God.

In the New Covenant, God reveals to us a law, but it is a law of freedom, written on our transformed hearts by the Spirit of God.

Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

33 "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD: "I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 “They will not teach again, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I will no longer remember.”

the Freedom we have over sin, the flesh, and the devil is found securely in the Word of God!

not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

blessed...means happy, because it is connected to God
In what he does...his doings....

Question....Do you desire life God’s way...or is it an expression we just say so easily and walk away from the mirror forgetting what God says, desires, and points us to?!

Listen Church, look intently into the Mirror of the Word, and do what it says.

Pastor Stan Riddle