

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Stop Kidding Yourself**

**James 1:19-27**

**Part Six**

The theme of James is Tests of Living Faith! This epistle was written so that we might know whether or not we are saved. The first test that we find in this epistle is the “The Response to Trials test.” This test is found in **James 1:2-18**. We have now begun to consider the second test of living faith and that is the “Response to the Word test.” This test is found in **James 1:19-27**.

The proper response to the Word first of all involves a “proper reception” which is described for us in **VV. 19-21**. But a proper response not only involves a proper reception but also AN ACTIVE OBEDIENCE which we see in **VV. 22-27**.

Let us read **VV. 22-27** “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude 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 looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (26) If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless. (27) This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**” How can we know if in fact we have received the Word in such a way that it has become implanted? We will know when we see ourselves practicing active obedience. It is not enough for us to simply think that we have received the Word properly we must see the fruit of it in our lives.

\ As we have begun to explore this area of active obedience to the Word we began two weeks ago by considering the demand for it in **VV. 22-25**.

#### DEMAND FOR ACTIVE OBEDIENCE (1:22)

The demand for active obedience is succinctly stated in **James 1:22** when James exhorts His readers with the following words, “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**” What does James mean when he says, “**But prove yourselves...**” The word “**prove**” (GINOMAI) literally means to “be continually” or to “keep on striving to be” **doers of the Word**. The word “**doer**” (POIETE) speaks of who a person is. When James is talking about someone who is a “doer”, he wants to make sure that we understand he is not talking about a person who tinkers with obedience but rather he is talking about someone who is actively practicing obedience and therefore it describes who he is. Therefore he issues the challenge to his readers, “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word.**”

Our lives need not only to be committed to properly receiving the Word but also properly responding to it. We must not only be known as one who is committed to receiving the Word, but also as one who is committed to doing it, not just once in a while but as a way of life.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

If this is not true of our lives, then we could be guilty of being “**merely hearers.**” Look at the rest of the verse “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word not merely hearers who delude themselves.**” The word “**hearers**” (AKROATES) refers to someone who takes no responsibility for what he may learn but is very much like someone who is simply auditing a class.

Those who James refers to as “merely hearers” he says “**delude themselves.**” What is the deception that James is talking about? The deception is very simple. It is believing that the hearing of the Word is all that is required. Simply hearing the Word should not bring us any comfort. God requires, as we see in **V. 22**, an active obedience to His Word.

James will go on to drive this point home in **VV. 23-25** by using two different portrayals. This morning we will be looking at these portrayals and hopefully as we examine them the importance of what James has been saying will be driven home to us even further. Hopefully, because of the time that we spend together this morning we will be even more diligent to approach the Word of God with a deep-rooted sense of responsibility. Hopefully, because of the time that we spend together this morning, we will not ever be satisfied with spending time in the Word without striving in some way to be changed by it.

### THE NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE HEARER (1:23-24)

Let me ask you a question: Why do people primarily use mirrors? They primarily use mirrors in order to examine themselves and to make themselves look as clean and as neat as possible. Before I come into this service on Saturday night or Sunday morning, I typically try and look at myself in a mirror to see if there is anything I need to do before I stand up here on the platform to speak to you, so that I would not be personally distracting. The Bible in a very real sense is to serve the very same purpose. We are not to approach the Bible in such a way that we see our personal shortcomings and then go away and do nothing about it. If we would do this we would be very much like a man who would look into a mirror see some obvious problems that need correction, but then goes away without doing what is necessary to correct them.

Let us read **VV. 22-24**, “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word and not merely hearers who delude 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.**”

**V. 23** begins by saying “**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;**” The word “looks” (KATANOEO) is a strengthened form of the verb “to look” (NOEO). The strengthened form carries the additional idea of careful, cautious consideration of what is being looked at. This careful consideration of what is being looked at is not particularly surprising.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Ancient mirrors were generally polished bronze, sometimes silver or even gold. Glass mirrors were not available until late Roman times. Mirrors of glass coated with quicksilver date to the thirteenth century. Therefore the reflection of ancient mirrors was often imperfect, as Paul implies in **1 Cor. 13:12**, but generally they were adequate for an individual to gain a good view of himself if he expended a reasonable effort. James's illustration and his choice of words is no accident.

When James is speaking about the “hearer” of the Word in these verses in contrast to the “doer” of the Word he is not primarily targeting a person who has no or little interest in the Word. He is not primarily talking about someone who has no interest in picking up the Scriptures during the week or who only comes to a worship service when it is convenient. James, I believe, assumes that we should all know that these people are messed up.

I believe he has chosen this particular image of a person who carefully looks into a mirror and then forgets what he saw, very thoughtfully. James, in this negative portrayal, is communicating to us as professing believers that it is not enough for us to think that simply hearing the Word is sufficient; it needs to go farther. Professing believers who appear to be OK, who may think reading a chapter out of their Bibles each day and going to church regularly and listening carefully to the message and thinking that they are OK, may in fact be deluding themselves.

James is concerned that professing believers' involvement with the Word may simply be a religious exercise but not a personal exercise resulting in some form of action; to James this is absurd. Just as absurd as if I looked into a mirror just before entering this service and saw that I had not combed my hair but did nothing about it.

Over the past several weeks we have been looking at the Response to the Word test. As we have been very carefully going through this passage, I would not doubt there may have been a few of you who during the service might have said to yourself after listening very carefully , “I need to become more involved in the reading and studying the Scriptures.” But it is not enough to listen carefully to the message and see our shortcoming; there must be more than that. So the question I would like to ask those of you who may have actually seen yourselves as lacking in this very important area, "What have you done about it?" What good is it if we look into the mirror of God's Word and see something that needs to be done but we don't follow through on it? If this is the pattern of our lives then what must we conclude about ourselves? We must conclude that we are what James calls a “hearer.” **BUT NOT ONLY DOES JAMES GIVE US A NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE HEARER, BUT HE ALSO GIVES US A POSITIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE DOER.**

### POSITIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE DOER (1:25)

We find the positive portrayal of the doer in **V. 25**. In this passage we again see an individual who is engaged in looking. Let us read the verse **“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.”**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

James here uses an even stronger verb for “looking” than in **verse 23**. The word “looking intently” (PARAKUPTO) means to bend over and carefully examine something from the clearest possible vantage point. It is the verb used by Luke to describe Peter’s looking into the empty tomb after Jesus’ resurrection (Luke 24:12) and the same verb used by John in his gospel (John 20:5,11) to refer to the very same incident. Therefore whereas the “forgetful hearer” may in fact be looking into the mirror carefully as we saw in **V. 23**, the person in **V. 25** goes beyond this.

James is picturing for us an individual who is bent over a mirror and who is gripped by what he sees and it leaves an indelible impression. For this person the act of looking is not a mere exercise of curiosity, as with the forgetful person just mentioned, but rather a life changing experience. I believe this far different reaction is largely dictated by how the Word of God is viewed. There is a reason why he bends over and examines the Scriptures with a much greater energy.

Notice that James in this verse chooses not to specifically refer to the image of the “mirror” which was used in **VV. 23 & 24** when describing the “hearer” but rather he goes to the heart of the matter and talks about us looking “**intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty**” when talking about the “doer.”

Let us read the verse, “**But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.**” I believe the response that we give when studying the Scriptures is very much determined by our view of the Scriptures and if we are going to be a “doer” rather than a forgetful “hearer”, we must view the Scriptures very much as the person who James describes here in **V. 25**.

The “implanted word” referred to in **V. 21** and “the word” in **V. 22** is now referred to as “**law.**” James, in choosing this term to refer to the Word of God and by this choice James communicates very powerfully the matter of its authority. I believe the doer of the Word when he comes to the Word comes with the mindset that whatever the Word says I will do it because it is law. But someone might say, “But this is silly! The Scriptures are not sufficient to guide us in terms of all the various situations that we face from day to day. “ But this is not what James says.

Look again at **V. 25**. He does not only see the Scriptures as “**law**” but a “**perfect law.**” What does James mean when he refers to the Scriptures as the “**perfect law?**” He sees the Scriptures as inerrant, sufficient, and comprehensive, or in other words, he sees them as the perfect authority. **Ps. 19:7-9** says, “**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.**” This is how the Psalmist viewed the Scriptures, this is the way James viewed the Scriptures, and I believe that this is how we must view the Word if we are going to become known as a “doer.”

But someone might say, “I don’t care if the Scriptures are the “perfect law” I don’t want to be under bondage. What a silly comment! What do the Scriptures teach us? The Scriptures teach us that everyone in this world is under bondage to something or someone.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

What does **John 8:34** tell us? “**Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin,”** and this is the truth. This is a terrible situation to be in. But we do not have to forever be the slave of sin. Look again at **James 1:25** “**But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty ....**” What does James mean when he refers to the Scriptures as the “**law of liberty**”. It simply means that the Scriptures have the power to set us free from the bondage of sin and to righteous obedience. It allows us to not serve God out of fear or mere sense of duty, but out of gratitude and love. One day it also will free us from this world and its corruption; from our fallenness, from our flesh, from temptation, and from the curses of sin, death, and hell itself. God’s law is thought by some as bringing bondage, but in reality it brings great “**liberty.**” Therefore in light of all that we believe, how could we come to the Word with any other mindset than what the verse encourages us to bring, which is “**to abide by it.**” This is what is going to cause us to get down on our knees in a figurative sense and scrutinize it carefully so that we might build it into our lives.

### CONCLUSION

So what are you going to do about all of this? Hopefully, you will never again be satisfied with simply being exposed to the Word. Hopefully, you will never again be satisfied with simply taking notes. Hopefully, you will never again be satisfied with just becoming more knowledgeable and more knowledgeable. But rather each time you are exposed to the Word, you will get down on your knees, figuratively speaking, and make sure as the Lord ministers to your life that you obey it. Is there a payoff for this effort? ..... **THIS MAN SHALL BE BLESSED IN ALL THAT HE DOES.**