

Blessedness of Practicing What is Preached Today (Jas. 1:25)

Practicing what's preached isn't a phrase invented by Christianity. A rabbi named Simeon b. Gamaliel who lived within a century of James, represented many when he said "Not the expounding [of the law] is the chief thing, but the doing [or practicing of it]."¹

An unknown modern author put it in a concise poem:

It's easier to preach than to practice; It's easier to say than to do.
Most sermons are heard by the many, But taken to heart by the few

The ancient author James (half-brother of Jesus) said it like this:

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 will be blessed in what he does.* (NASB)

James writes to encourage you with blessedness at the end of v. 25: "*this man will be blessed in what he does.*" This is no joyless duty James is commanding us as a legalist; this is the source of true joy, true happiness, boundless blessedness instead of the burden of the Pharisees who made doing God's law a yoke because it was not for the right motivation or from the right heart. In fact, verse 25 begins by extolling "*the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty*" (can be translated "law that gives liberty"). Liberty is the opposite of legalism, as James understood well (see Acts 15).

James and the apostles of the early church in that chapter taught the Law of Moses should be NOT imposed on Gentiles (and it was a yoke their Jewish fathers couldn't bear either), and never was any saved by law. But while the Mosaic law was binding on OT Israel, God's moral law remains binding on all because God's moral character has not changed. James is in no disagreement with Jesus who Himself said He "*did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it*" (Matthew 5:17, then He immediately warned against those who teach against and annul the least of the commandments, and said those who keep them are great in the kingdom, v. 19). Christ fulfilled perfectly God's law by obeying it and He also went on to teach how we must fulfill the full intent of God's law which Jesus filled out and expounded in its fullness in that same chapter.

The way James speaks of the law here is in no conflict with Paul who said the law is good, when understood rightly, and Paul said he joyfully delighted in the law of God in his inner man.

Paul as he argues for our freedom from slavery to legalism in Galatians 5 commands that we do deeds of love from a heart of love to fulfill the Law (v. 13-14) and he says in 6:2 *“bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* This is also consistent with the OT prophets who spoke of new covenant believers who would have God’s law written on their hearts.

Listen to what God Himself said from heaven when the Law was first given – this is how God prefaced the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20 ¹ *Then God spoke all these words, saying,* ² *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, **out of the house of slavery.**”* ³ *“You shall have no other gods before Me ...*

God ‘is speaking to those whom he has brought out of bondage (Ex. 20:2b): not to those whom he is bringing into bondage by imposing his law upon them, but to those who are now (for the first time) enjoying liberty, and to whom he gives his perfect law in order to safeguard the freedom he has secured for them.’²

When you see the word “law” (or commands, precepts, rules, etc.) you may think of something binding and restrictive, not freeing. But Scripture *is* binding *and it is* blessedly freeing, truly liberating.

- Ps 119:45 *“I will walk at liberty, for I seek your precepts”*
- John 8:32 *“the truth [God’s Word] will set you free”*
- 1 Jn 5:3 says they who love God *“keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”*

Hiebert explains that in the grammar of James 1:25, the phrase: “of liberty” is subjective, denoting that this law “gives” the experience of freedom in the lives of those who voluntarily observe it. The definite article with “liberty” “the liberty,” points to the well-known Christian freedom from bondage that the believer knows through faith in Christ ... As he submits himself to its transforming power, this law of liberty works in his life a disposition and ability to do God’s will joyfully ... It does not promote antinomianism [anti-law, cheap grace, no works] ... but prompts obedience without compulsion. In Jas 2:12, the only other place in the New Testament where the designation “law of liberty” occurs, James associates it with the law of love [which Jesus said sums up and fulfills the OT law, love God and neighbor]. The believer is not free from the obligation to do God’s will as revealed in His Word, but love works in him the desire to do his Father’s will. Men are free when they want to do what they ought to do.’³

There is much more that could be said about law in relation to NT / grace, and we'll discuss it more when James discusses it more in chap 2, but just note for now that everything James is calling us to do must be grace-empowered. There's no power source in the law itself, but there is in living gospel faith as indwelt by God's Spirit.

And the word "blessed" at the end of v. 25 makes clear that there is a deep-rooted joy that can be found in obeying God's commands, not a mere duty but a delight. God inspired this text so that we may experience blessedness in practicing what is preached today! God doesn't want us to waste and forget any message in His precious Word. Don't waste your life! Hear God's inspired Word today!

How can you grow more in your joy in God's Word, not motivated by legalism but by love (so that you say like Psalm 119:97 "*O, how I love thy law!*")? How can your time in God's Word be more delight than duty, more blessing than burden, so that a sermon is not just passing time but is the passionate hunger of your heart?

4 Ways God Blesses His People with Freeing Transforming Joy:

1. By Reflective Study of the Word
2. By Regular Abiding with the Word
3. By Remembering to Obey the Word
4. By Reward in Living the Living Word

1. **By Reflective Study of the Word**

"but the one who looks intently at the perfect law..."

I'm using the word "reflective" because the connecting word "but" at the beginning of v. 25 links back to the image of vv. 23-24:

²³For 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; ²⁴for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵But one who looks intently ...

God's Word is to be merely heard or studied academically. It is to be studied reflectively. You should be reflecting on what is being taught on Sunday and holding up what the teacher is saying, in light of the mirror of the open Word in your lap (Acts 17:11). You should reflect on it afterwards, meditate on it, rather than immediately forget what you have just seen or heard (like v. 24b). You should reflect on yourself (v. 23), reflecting on what it says about you and your life and your heart in the mirror of the Word.

Search the Scriptures and let the Scriptures search you as well. One of the uses of the law is to reveal our sin, as Paul taught in Romans (3:20, 7:7, etc.). As we look into the perfect law, we see our imperfect reflection, so that we can change. Unless you're a proud and vain person, that's why you look into a mirror, not to see how great thou art, but to see where thou aren't so great, to see what's wrong with thy appearance so thou can fix it. The contrast "but" in v. 25 is a literary "about face" (pun intended) to the one who hears and does not do anything, but just walks away.

Mirrors in ancient times were not perfect and often gave a poor reflection dimly or darkly (1 Cor. 13:12) but they still showed the face and its imperfections. James says in v. 25, how much more the "perfect law" reflects not only our outer man, but true inner soul.

James who writes this verse as a direct ancestor of the line of King David, may have been reflecting on David's "perfect law," too:

Ps 19:7-14 - *The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul ... rejoicing the heart ... enlightening the eyes ... Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless [free from visible blemish]*

That's the perfect type of attitude to have to the perfect law of the Lord that enlightens your eyes, corrects and restores your soul -- pray that it would help you discern your errors you would never see without it and that the reflection would reveal faults of yours that were previously hidden, so you can deal with your blemishes. As we let the Word rule the words of our mouths and meditations of our heart to be more pleasing in our perfect Redeemer's sight, God's Word not only convicts our heart, but it says it results in "rejoicing the heart" -- not only by God's words are we warned, but "in keeping them [not just hearing] there is great reward."

David experienced the mirror of God's Word; sometimes it was painful, like when Nathan spoke God's Word and held it up like a mirror to David when he told of a man's sin by parable and when David was angry about the sin, Nathan said "Thou art the man!" But David's brokenness in repentance led to blessed rejoicing.

Ps 51 ⁸*Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice ...* ¹²*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation ...*

When James says “*looks intently at the perfect law,*” he uses a different word for “look” than in v. 23-24. The word for “look” in v. 25 is used 4 other times, and 3 of those refer to the disciples stooping down, bending over, leaning into to look into the empty tomb of Jesus, looking for the Lord intently and carefully. The other use of the term is 1 Peter 1:12 where it speaks of salvation in the gospel, and things “*which angels long to look into.*” Blessed believers also long to gaze deeply into the glories of the gospel of our resurrected Christ, looking for Him with a bent low posture.

Yogi Berra said, “you can see a lot by looking.” He may not have been a theologian, but there’s a lot of theological truth we can see by looking at Scripture which reflects much about our sin. But it doesn’t stop there, it reflects much about our Savior. Jesus said “*you search the Scriptures* [NIV “diligently study”] ... *it is these that testify about me*” (John 5:39). You cannot truly separate the two; Jesus is revealed as the Word (John 1), and both Christ and His Word are called bread (Mt 4:4; Jn 6:48), truth (Jn 14:6; 17:17), and light (Ps 119:105; Jn 8:12). Christ is the light of the world, and Christ also said to His disciples “*You are the light of the world*” – we who follow His Word are to reflect Christ our true light source, like the moon reflects the light from the Sun; we reflect God’s Son.

Don’t miss the ultimate aim of reflective study of Scripture, which is not yourself only, it’s your Savior. You’re not just to see your sin in this mirror; you’re to see the Christ-centered God-glorifying grace-magnifying deliverance *from your sin*, in Jesus of Nazareth! James doesn’t just want us to see our sin in this mirror, He wants us to look to our Savior who can cleanse us from all filthy stains.

In *Pilgrim’s Progress* this dual image is presented in a magnificent mirror that the Shepherds showed to Christiana and Mercy. Citing James 1 in the margin, it says the mirror ‘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. Yes, I have talked with them that can tell, and they have said that they have seen the very crown of thorns upon his head by looking in that glass; they have therein also seen the holes in his hands, his feet, and his side. Yea, such an excellency is there in this glass, that it will show him to one where they have a mind to see him, whether living or dead; whether in earth, or in heaven; whether in a state of humiliation, or in his exaltation; whether coming to suffer, or coming to reign.’⁴

As you look at the mirror of Scripture, don't miss the One who is the whole point of all Scripture, as so many of the Jews did, learning *about* the Lord, but not learning Christ, loving Christ.

Luke 24 ²⁵*And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ... ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.***

If you can't see Him there, you haven't looked long enough or deeply enough. Study reflectively, reverently, looking to Christ who alone can open our eyes to the veiled glory of Christ Himself.

2 Corinthians 3 says we: ¹³ *... are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; [some of you to this day also have veils blocking your vision of Christ because of hard unrepentant heart – look to Christ] ¹⁶but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸But 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 from the Lord, the Spirit.*

That's a passage that also speaks of liberty and speaks of a mirror that transforms us – it really deserves its own sermon on how beholding is becoming, how our sanctification in Christ is tied to our seeing and savoring Christ, how the more we look *to Jesus*, the more we look *like Jesus*; beholding is key to becoming (1 Jn 3:3).

But for now we must move on; God Blesses His People with Freeing Transforming Joy by Reflective Study of the Word (#1)...

2. By Regular Abiding with the Word

²⁵*But one who looks intently at the perfect law ... and abides by it*

In verse 24, the man looks in the mirror and goes away, but the blessed believer of v. 25 stays to gaze. He or she not only bows down to look intently, but remains in that posture, abiding there. This Greek word *parameno* comes from 2 words that literally mean "stay / remain + near / beside / alongside; i.e., stand by side."

In its other 3 uses in the NT, it's translated as "continue" (Heb. 7:23), usually the idea of continuing with, in close communication.
 -1 Cor 16:6 *perhaps I shall **stay with** you, or even spend the winter*
 - Phil. 1:25 *I shall remain and **continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith.*** (Note: Some take parameno in that context to mean something like "I will continue to live".)

The abiding here is not merely with the pages of a book, but is a personal communication and communing with the Person who is inseparably associated with His book, Jesus. When you open your Bible, ask its Author to open your heart to see and love Him more. Our Lord speaks of His Word and Himself interchangeably often.

- John 8 (NKJV) ³¹ *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "**If you abide** [same root word] **in My word**, you are My [true] disciples ... ³² *And you shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free.**" ... ³⁶ *Therefore **if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*** [like in James 1:25, abiding in the Word brings freedom – Christ makes you free / truth of Word makes you free – parallel]**
- "**abide in me and my Word abides in you...**" (15:7, not just about being in His Word, but His Word being in us!)
- "**Abide in me and I in you**" (v. 4 – not only does the Word of Christ abide in us, Christ Himself abides in us!)

There are many who are "in" the Scriptures who are not in Christ. Jesus said to the Jews "*you search the Scriptures*" (John 5:39) but in the verse right before He said "*You do not have His word **abiding in you**, for you do not believe Him whom He sent*" (v. 38). You can study the Word and hear the Word preached all you want, but for whoever doesn't obey the Son of God, John 3:36 says "*the **wrath of God abides on him.***" It's not enough to hear the Word or hang out with on Sunday the people of the Word, to be truly saved.

1 John 2:24 "*As for you, **let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.***"

2 John 9 "*Anyone who goes too far and **does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.***"

Abiding in the Word of Christ is a mark of true disciples. The text says those who hear but whose lives don't abide ... don't have life.

True believers are “blessed” with freeing transforming joy by reflective study of the Word, regular abiding with the Word, and...

3. By **Remembering to Obey the Word**

“... and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer ...”

A “forgetful hearer” is a “hearer only” who is self-deceived (v. 22 says). Deceived = mathematic term for miscalculate, and the worst kind of self-deception is miscalculating the state of your soul. All of us struggle with forgetfulness (I know I’m worse at this than many of you – I know if I see or think of something I need to do if I don’t instantly do something right away, I immediately forget).

This is more than just occasional accidental forgetfulness we all struggle with – the forgetfulness here is

Many don’t want to really search the Scriptures, because the Scriptures search out their heart, and shine the light on what we prefer not to see. John 3 says men love the darkness and want to stay there, and 2 Peter 3 speaks of those who willfully or deliberately forget.

The **present imperative** calls for doing of the word to be the habitual practice or lifestyle of his readers. James demands that doing be their continual practice. Believers are never to stop being doers of the Word! Keep on striving to be doers.

Doers (4163)

Main clause emphasis-Other—Describes the placement of the most important element(s) of the main clause in a position of prominence to attract extra attention to it based on something besides word order. This kind of prominence can be achieved through the use of a point-counterpoint set. Alternatively, if only one portion of a clause element is fronted for emphasis’ sake, the remainder of this element also receives emphasis by virtue of its grammatical relation to the fronted portion. ¹

¹Runge, S. (2008; 2008). *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament: Glossary* (ldgnt.em-fmco). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

(poietes from **poieo** = to do, to make, to accomplish) describes one who does something as his occupation such as a producer, a poet or an author. The other sense describes a doer or a performer, speaking of one who does what is prescribed, such as one who keeps the law ([Ro 2:13-note](#))

Our lives can become spiritually stagnant like the Dead Sea when we only receive the Word of God and then do not translate it into appropriate action.

A lake can have the most beautiful spring water in the world flowing into its reservoir. But unless there are outlets, that beautiful water becomes stale and stagnant. The same phenomenon takes place in our lives if we are not living the life of active obedience and allowing the Holy Spirit to overflow into our lives. Nothing is more obnoxious to God than dead orthodoxy. To know the Word of God and not to live it is sin (James 4:17).

Frankly, this is the problem faced by many Christians within the contemporary church. They have become mere spectators who enjoy listening to the Word of God preached and taught Sunday after Sunday. Their heads are filled with biblical knowledge and facts, but they ignore the translating of that knowledge into godly living.

Their spiritual heads grow fatter and fatter while their spiritual bodies are wasting away from lack of use. They are spiritual freaks who are of little value to themselves, the church, or the world. In the words of James, they are deceived. They have deceived themselves by merely knowing without “doing.”²

Pastor Stuart Briscoe was teaching the principles of Bible study. He showed how to pick out the promises and the commands in Scripture, and what to do with them. Finally, he reviewed and asked, “Now, what do you do with the commands?” A little old lady raised her hand and said, “I underline them in blue.”

²Cedar, P. A., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1984). *Vol. 34: The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 34 : James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*. Formerly The Communicator's Commentary. The Preacher's Commentary series (45). Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc.

Too many Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles never mark them!

Jesus often told parables to illustrate truth memorably. One modern parable that illustrates the truth of Jas. 1:25 is given as follows

‘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 [updated illustration: headphones on to her iPod, texting her girlfriends, multi-tasking between Facebook and Twitter] ... I look around and notice the wastebaskets 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.”⁵

In the business world, or any realm of life, that type of attitude would be disastrous. And yet spiritually this is the very disastrous scenario that will take place in thousands of churches this very day and in some in this church. Only God knows how many of you here are spiritually not much different than that parable, and the spiritual disaster is not only future, but already taking place in you. Some will walk out of church thinking they’re better off spiritually when they’re actually worse off spiritually and don’t know it.

Don’t just sit there! Do what the Word says! Don’t be a hearer only, be a doer of the Word, or you’re deceiving yourself (v. 22)!

The little kids sing the song “Read your Bible, pray every day, and you’ll grow, grow, grow.” James might tweak it just a little: *Read your Bible, obey, and pray every day, and you’ll grow, grow, grow*

Turn to Luke 6, which many believe is the background for James who grew up in the same house with Jesus, and may very well have been present when his half-brother Jesus spoke these words, even though James was himself self-deceived then and wasn’t then receiving or doing the words of Jesus. Jesus also told a parable of hearing and not putting into practice, which is not only deluding or deceptive to yourself, but is disastrous and deadly spiritually.

Luke 6 ⁴⁶ “*Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ...* ⁴⁹ “*But the one who has **heard and has not acted accordingly**, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and **immediately** it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.*”

No one would want that type of spiritual disaster for themselves but it’s the promised end of habitual hearers who aren’t doers.

⁴⁷ “*Everyone who comes to Me and **hears My words and acts** [same Greek words as James 1:25 “hearer ... Word ... act / doer”] on them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.*

J. C. Ryle pointed out 3 observations on these verses:

‘1. *Profession without practice is a common sin*

Let us note in these verses what a common sin it is to profess something and to fail to practice it. It is written that our Lord said, **“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”** (verse 46). The Son of God himself had many followers who pretended to honor him by calling him Lord but never obeyed his commands. The evil which our Lord exposes here has always existed in God’s church (see Ezekiel 33:31; James 1:22–25). It is a disease which has never failed to prevail all over Christendom. Open sin and avowed unbelief no doubt slay their thousands. But profession without practice slays its tens of thousands.

2. The person who not only listens to Christ’s sayings but also does Christ’s will

Let us note, second, in these verses what a striking picture our Lord draws of the person who not only hears Christ’s sayings but does Christ’s will. He compares him to **“a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock”** (verse 48). Such a person’s religion may cost him much. Like the house built on a rock, it may involve him in great effort, labor, and self-denial. To put to one side pride and self-righteousness, to crucify the rebellious flesh, to put on the mind of Christ, to take up the cross daily, to count everything as loss for Christ’s sake—all this may be hard work. But like the house built on the rock, such religion will stand. The streams of affliction may beat violently on it, and the floods of persecution hit strongly against it, but it will not give way. The Christianity which combines good profession and good practice is a building that will not fall.

3. The person who listens to Christ’s sayings but does not obey them

Let us note, lastly, in these verses what a sad picture our Lord draws of the person who hears Christ’s sayings but does not obey them. He compares him to one who **“built a house on the ground without a foundation”** (verse 49). Such a person’s religion may look fine for a while. An ignorant eye may detect no difference between this person and a true Christian. Both may worship in the same church. Both may use the same ordinances. Both may profess the same faith. The outward appearance of the house built on the rock and the house without any solid foundation may be much the same. But the day of trial and affliction is the test which exposes the house with no solid foundation. Great indeed will be its ruin. Its destruction will be complete. There is no loss like the loss of a soul.⁶

How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in His excellent word ... but only for those who put it into practice.

Doer (4163) (poietes [word study] from poieo = to do, to make, to accomplish) describes one who does something as his occupation such as a producer, a poet or an author. The other sense describes a doer or a performer, speaking of one who does what is prescribed, such as one who keeps the law (Ro 2:13-note)

Hiebert remarks that this effectual doer...

is marked by persistent performance of what he has learned in being a receptive hearer of God's word. The emphasis is not on certain notable deeds he performs but on his characteristic obedience to God's known will.

Keep the context in mind, for James had just charge his readers to...

prove (present imperative) yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers (akroates = "auditors") who delude themselves. (Jas 1:22-note)

The Puritan Thomas Watson rightly observed that...

Doers of the Word are the best hearers.

Spurgeon writes that...

There are many who complain of their short memories when they are hearing sermons. Well, then, let them be quick about doing what the sermon bids them, and then they will not be forgetful hearers.

Not forgetting what he has heard. Hearers must take care that they do not forget the good things given to them. Here are some helps for the memory:

(1) Attention. People remember what they heed and regard. "Pay attention to what I say ... keep them within your heart" (Proverbs 4:20–21)—that is, in a place where nothing can take them away. Where there is attention, there will be retention. The memory is the chest of divine truths, and a man should carefully lock them up. "Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come?" (Isaiah 42:23).

(2) Affection. This is a great friend to the memory. People remember what they care for. An old man will not forget where he has put his bag of gold. Delight and love are always renewing and reviving the object of our thoughts. David often asserts his delight in the law, and therefore it was always in his thoughts: "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (Psalm 119:97).

It's only those who truly trust in and delight in Christ who abide in His Word and His Word abides in them. Again, Christ

These are not the self-deceived hearers-only in v. 22 who may sit in church and have a temporary or superficial faith, but who are not truly disciples of Christ.

4. By Reward in Living the Living Word

In all we do, there is a deep happiness, a deep-rooted joy,

In verses 21-25 James tells us:

How NOT to listen to a sermon (v. 21-24)

How TO listen to a sermon (v. 25 – next week)

This Greek word for “hearer” appears 3x in this text and only one other time in the NT: Romans 2:13 says what marks those who are justified / saved is that they are doers of the law. It says it's not the “hearers” of the law who are justified or saved – those who hear without doing actually *increase* their condemnation. The biblical mark of biblical faith is biblical obedience. Believers don't just make marks in their Bibles with pens or pencils, the Bible makes its mark in their life with the red letters written on their hearts.

To never be bothered by or pricked to the heart by the Word is a warning sign of the greatest self-deception, thinking you're saved when you're not (Acts 2:37, Hebrews 4:12). The hearers only in v.

22 are deceiving themselves. The worst kind of self-deception is to be mistaken about the state of your soul, and your eternal destination (this concern of James will become very clear in chapter 2). If the habit and pattern of your life (that's the tense of the verb in 1:22) is not to seek to obey God's Word, you may be one of those self-deceived ones with false assurance of heaven saying "Lord, Lord."

James, like Jesus, illustrates our Lord's truth by a parable / picture:

be ye doers. Ja 2:14-20. 4:11, μ17. Dt +*26:16. Mt 5:19. μ7:21-25. 12:50. *28:20. Lk *6:46-48. *8:21. +*11:28. +*12:47, 48. Jn *8:31. +*13:17. Ro *2:13. Ep 2:10. Ph μ4:8, 9. Col *3:17. Ti 3:8. 1 J 2:μ3, 9, 10. 3:7. 3 J *11. Re *22:7³

Our lives can become spiritually stagnant like the Dead Sea when we only receive the Word of God and then do not translate it into appropriate action.

A lake can have the most beautiful spring water in the world flowing into its reservoir. But unless there are outlets, that beautiful water becomes stale and stagnant. The same phenomenon takes place in our lives if we are not living the life of active obedience and allowing the Holy Spirit to overflow into our lives. Nothing is more obnoxious to God than dead orthodoxy. To know the Word of God and not to live it is sin (James 4:17).

Frankly, this is the problem faced by many Christians within the contemporary church. They have become mere spectators who enjoy listening to the Word of God preached and taught Sunday after Sunday. Their heads are filled with biblical knowledge and facts, but they ignore the translating of that knowledge into godly living.

³Smith, J. H. (1992; Published in electronic form, 1996). *The new treasury of scripture knowledge : The most complete listing of cross references available anywhere- every verse, every theme, every important word* (1466). Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson.

Their spiritual heads grow fatter and fatter while their spiritual bodies are wasting away from lack of use. They are spiritual freaks who are of little value to themselves, the church, or the world. In the words of James, they are deceived. They have deceived themselves by merely knowing without “doing.”⁴ The world today is not reading the Bible, but they are reading you and me. Someone has expressed it poetically.

The Gospel is written a chapter a day
 By deeds that you do and by words that you say.
 Men read what you say, whether faithless or true.
 Say, what is the Gospel according to you?⁵

—Author unknown

Wiersbe: It is not enough to hear the Word; we must do it. Many people have the mistaken idea that hearing a good sermon or Bible study is what makes them grow and get God’s blessing. It is not the hearing but *the doing* that brings the blessing. Too many

⁴Cedar, P. A., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1984). *Vol. 34: The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 34 : James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude*. Formerly The Communicator's Commentary. The Preacher's Commentary series (45). Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc.

⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (5:639). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles never mark them!
If you think you are spiritual because you hear the Word, then you are only kidding yourself. ⁶

The use of the present imperative has underlines this demand as a continuing duty to obey the Word, to make it a habit of being a doer, to make it a practice of putting it into practice. Literally, it can be translated “become doers” or “keep becoming doers” and it can have the force of “show yourselves more and more.”

Practicing what is preached was not a phrase invented by Christianity. A rabbi named Simeon b. Gamaliel who lived in the next century, represented many when he said “Not the expounding [of the law] is the chief thing, but the doing [of it].” – cited in Moo, p. 89.

In the ancient world, it was common for people to hear a teacher. But if you followed the teacher and tried to live what he said, you were called a disciple of that teacher. Jesus is looking for disciples - doers, not just hearers.

AUDITORS

²² *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

Luke 11:27-28 (NASB95) ²⁷ *While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.”* [Hebrew way to say “blessed be the mother of Jesus,” “hail Mary!”] ²⁸ *But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who **hear the word of God** [same as Jas 1:22] **and observe it.**”*

⁶Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Jas 1:22). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

¹ – cited in Moo, p. 89.

²Motyer, J. A. (1985). *The message of James : The tests of faith.* The Bible speaks today (71). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A.: Inter-Varsity Press.

³ Hiebert, 122.

⁴ John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II, Seventh Stage.

⁵ Chuck Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*, pp. 170-171.

⁶Ryle, J. C. (1997). *Luke.* The Crossway classic commentaries (Lk 6:48). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.