

Responding to the Word

James 1:19-27

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As I was thinking about what I might share with you this morning, I was reading in the Epistle of James this week and it struck me that there's such a powerful, powerful portion of that chapter right at the very end and that's what I want to address with you this morning. So open your Bibles to James chapter 1.

I'm going to read you a passage here from versus 19 down to verse 27 and then address the great truths in that together with you. James 1 beginning in verse 19, "This you know my beloved brethren but let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God; therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. In humility, receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 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 the mirror. For once he has looked at himself and gone away he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 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. 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. 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."

Year after year and month after month week after week here in Grace Community Church we study the word of God. We preach the word of God. We teach the word of God that is the heart and soul of this ministry. And I suppose from time to time it's important to stop and affirm why we do that. This passage allows me that opportunity.

The Psalmist said, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord," Psalm 119, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord." In the same Psalm, the Psalmist expressed his deepest desire, "oh, let me not wonder from thy commandments." He expressed his deepest affection, "oh how I love thy law." He expressed his greatest happiness, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches."

In other words, he found everything in the word of God. And that's why he says in verse 30, "I have chosen the way of truth." In fact, in verse 161 of that same Psalm he says, "My heart stands in awe of thy word."

The word is the heart and soul of our Christian experience. In it God speaks. In the same Psalm, the Psalmist again said, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." Everything in it is true. And he summed it up with this commitment, "I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always even to the end."

His commitment was to the word of God to hear it, to love it, to believe it, to apply it. The Godly are described in Psalm 1, "In the familiar words, as those who delight in the law of the Lord and in that law meditate day and night."

And frankly, a person's attitude toward and response to the word of God is at the very core of their Christianity. That's why we teach the Bible here. There's really nothing else to say.

In the section that I read to you, James makes two major themes clear and helps us to understand what is important about them. First of all, he talks about a proper reception of the word and secondly a proper response to the word. I suppose you could look at those two things in this way how the word goes in and how the word comes out. That's really the issue.

Let's begin with James by looking at a proper reception of the word. You will notice in verse 21 the little phrase, "Receive the word." "Receive the word." In verses 19 to 21, he is talking about this reception of the word. And there are a number of things it must be attendant to a proper reception.

You remember Jesus said in Mark 4:24, "Take heed what you hear." And in Luke 8:18, he said, "Take heed how you hear." It's not just what we here it's how we here it. Jesus pointed out in the parable of the soils in Matthew 13, that people hear the same word. The seed is the word of God but they have very differing responses to it.

It's not the what as much as the how. The word, the truth, falls on hard ground accomplishes nothing. Falls on stony ground ultimately accomplishes nothing. Falls on wheaty soil ultimately accomplishes nothing. Falls on good grounds and on those various good grounds one, two and three produces a thirty fold, sixty fold, one hundred fold response. It's the same truth. The what is the same. The how is different.

Now, how are we to receive the word? Three features answer that question. Number one, we are to receive the word with submission -- submission. Verse 19, "This you know my beloved brethren."

What does he mean by that? Well, it really connects up with what was just said as well as what is to be said. This you know, and of course he has just spoken in verse 18 about the power of the word of truth; in fact, in verse 18 he says he brought us forth. He regenerated us. He raised us from the dead. He gave us life. He saved us redeemed us by the word of truth.

This you know; in other words, you've already experienced the power of the word. You already know that the word is alive and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. You already know what Peter said, "That you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable. That is through the living and abiding word of God. And this is the word that was preached to you," 1 Peter 1.

You have already experienced in your conversion, in your salvation, the power of the word of God. You know that the law of the Lord is perfect totally transforming the whole inner-man as Psalm 19:7 puts it. You know that.

You already know that the Scripture can make you wise under salvation. You know that it is profitable to make the man of God complete thoroughly furnished unto all good works. You already know that. You have already experienced that because you were born of the truth. You know that the gospel is the power of God both to the Jew and the Greek to whoever believes.

So you have already heard the word. You have already experienced its power. Now because you already know that my beloved brethren I want you as the thrust of this to continue to receive the word.

You already have experienced its power at that massive level that we would call conversion or regeneration transferring you out of darkness to light out of death to life. You have already experienced that.

Now, I want you to continue to receive the word. It is our food. It is our drink. It is our light. It is our lamp. It is our path. We must commit to hearing the word.

And it's along that line that he then says, "Here's how I want you to respond to it. Let everyone be quick to hear." Now, I suppose if you just pulled this verse out of the section, uprooted it, you might conclude that this is some kind of generic statement about being a good listener. Listen to your kids. Listen to your wife. Listen to your friends and don't talk too much.

And that's a nice kind of way to be but that's not what this is talking about. The context here is all about the word of truth and when it says be quick to hear it means to be eager, to put yourself under the proclamation of the word of God. That's what it's talking about.

The idea here is to grasp every opportunity to increase your hearing of God's word. The word of God is the theme. You see the word of God mentioned in verse 18. You see the word of God mentioned again in verse 21, "Receive the word." You see it mentioned in verse 22, "The word." You see it mentioned in verse 23, "The word." And it's referred to in verse 25 "As the perfect law the law of liberty."

The context here is the word and it is the word that we are to be quick to hear. The idea again is to grasp every opportunity to increase your hearing of God's word. To pursue every privileged occasion to obtain the knowledge of God.

Literally in the Greek, be quick to the hearing. Go to the lesson. Go to the sermon. Go to the class. Go to the exposition. Get where you can hear.

In verses 2-12, James talked about trials. Life is made up of trials. And when the trials come they demand wisdom from God and the word provides that wisdom.

And then starting in verse 13 down to verse 18 he talks about temptation. And the temptations come and when they come they demand knowledge of the word of God to be withstood. So whether you're talking about the trials of life or the temptations -- solicitations to evil, we need the word of God which gives us the foundation on which we stand.

And so James says, "Put yourself quickly. Hasten every time you have the opportunity to get where you can hear the word of God." Charles Wesley cultivated this element in his own faith when he wrote among the many, many magnificent poems that he wrote and set to music he said this, "When quiet in my room I sit thy book be my companion still. My joy thy sayings to repeat, talk or the records of thy will and search the oracle divine until every heart felt word is mine."

That's the heart that James is after, quick to hear. Psalm 119:11, the Psalmist again says, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever for they are the rejoicing of my heart." If they are the joy of your heart you're going to be quick to hear.

Listen I know why people are here. I know why you're here this morning. I know why people come to this church on a Sunday night. I know why they go to a fellowship group. I know why they attend classes. I know why because they love the truth.

Alex Motyere 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 doesn't do that. Rather, he goes deeper. For frankly there is little point to schemes and times if we have not got an attentive spirit. It is possible to be unfailingly regular in Bible reading but to achieve no more than to have moved the bookmark forward. The word is read but not heard."

James says, "Be quick to hear. Hear what it says." But he immediately adds something else, "Slow to speak --slow to speak." I don't think he's talking about again generically being kind of a quiet person. You can be mistaken for being very profound if you never say anything. That's not the issue.

What he's talking about here is when it comes to the hearing of the word be in a hurry to hear it when it comes to the teaching of the word slow down. You have just engaged yourself in the most serious engagement and exercise on the face of the earth, teaching the word of the living God. Eagerly, do we pursue every opportunity to hear it? Reluctantly, do we pursue any opportunity to speak it?

People sometimes ask me if I get nervous before I preach. Well, I've done this for a long time. And what they mean has to be answered, "No, I don't get nervous." It's not unfamiliar ground to me. I'm very much at home here.

So I don't get nervous about public speaking. But there's another thing that goes on in me and it is there all the time. And it is a constantly, engaging reluctance to do this frankly at all. There's ascension which I came into this kicking and screaming and I'm still doing it.

There's ascension in which I approach every Sunday with a bit of reluctance because I have to assume that you are accepting what I say as the word of the living God and that frankly is more responsibility than I should have to bear.

You might think that a preacher who preaches as much as I do charges into this thing with some kind of rapacious attitude. Nothing could be further from the truth and if you want to know the truth I would be perfectly content to spend the rest of my life just doing the preparation and never preaching the sermons because for me the joy is in the discovery.

The responsibility comes when I spread it around. James chapter 3, James elucidates what he means in chapter 1 when in verse one he says, "Let not many of you become teachers my brethren knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." Now who in their right mind wants that?

I mean it's tough enough to be under divine scrutiny without elevating yourself into a category that's even higher. That's why 1 Timothy 5:22 says, "Don't go laying hands on anyone too soon because when you push them into the responsible position of teaching and they're not appropriately prepared for that they will simply incur a stricter judgment. And also they may compound the iniquities of others by what they say."

Sadly, tragically there are preachers all over the world who are irresponsible and are going to face severe judgment some day in the economy of God when they have to take a stand on the things that they have said that have polluted the revelation of God. But it's a frightening thing and James says, "Don't be in a hurry to speak."

So corresponding to the positive command to receive the word with submissiveness is this negative command as to that nature of that submissiveness; the certain reluctance to speak the Scripture, a holy fear.

A number of years ago when I first went to Scotland to preach I didn't know this of course I knew the great story of John Knox the Scottish reformer and what a man he was. I just recently reread biographical material on John Knox and was again astonished at the kind of man that he was.

But John Knox was the Scottish preacher who defined the reformation in Scotland and who stood up to preach and was the powerful, bold proclaimer. And now they call pulpits like this in churches the John Knox desk or the John Knox pulpit.

And when you ascend to preach and you always ascend some little man called the church sexton fixes you up and puts you on a robe and pushes you up these little stairs when it's time to ascend and you go up into the John Knox pulpit.

And it's sort of an elevated thing, in the liturgy of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, the pulpit is up. It's elevated. It's not to elevate the preacher but it is to elevate the proclamation of the word of God.

But when you think about John Knox, and you get into the story of his life, you find that he was the very opposite of a man who wanted to be elevated. Here they've named pulpits after him which in a sense leaves his legacy on the back of every preacher who steps into one of them though most of them have long ago abandoned it.

But John Knox, according to his own biographer, when he was first called to preach had this reaction. This is what his biographer says, "He burst forth in most abundant tears and withdrew himself to his chamber. He started to cry and ran to his room."

The biographer continues, "His face, his countenance, and behavior from that day till the day he was compelled to present himself in the public place of preaching did sufficiently declare the trouble and grief of his soul." The man was in constant grief from the time he was told he had to preach until he got there.

Why? Because of the seriousness of what he was dealing with. Now apparently in some of the fellowships to whom James writes, of course he's writing to converted Jews scattered all over everywhere, but apparently there were a lot of folks who wanted to talk and not listen. He makes reference to them in verse 26 of chapter 1, people who don't bridle their tongue.

The whole of chapter 3 is all about the tongue. So apparently there were some folks in there who were real quick to speak and slow to listen and so James reverses that for them. And then he adds this and I think it's a wonderful addition in verse 19, "And slow to anger".

He uses the word here for anger or gay which means a deep seated resentment. It's not an outburst. It's not thumas. It's not some kind of explosion where you lose your temper. This is a deep seated resentment. Now, he says, "I want you people to be eager to hear the word, very reluctant to be put in the place to speak it, and very slow to boil inside with resentment when you hear it." That's the issue.

And here's where we get to the submissiveness. It refers to a disposition that is used in Scripture as such, Romans 1, Romans 9, "I want you to hear the word and I want you to hear it without any resistance." Often people who hear the word of God get hostile toward the truth and toward the preacher.

My mail has many illustrations of that hostility. The truth is presented. They don't want to hear the truth. They don't like the truth. And so it begins a smoldering resentment.

Some people begin to resent when they hear something that's different than what they believe. Some people resent when they hear something that confronts them. They are hostile to the truth because they're convicted by it.

Some people come through the church, a church like this. Hearing me say something, say I'll never go back there again. That offends me. And that's an anger, a resentment toward the truth.

In Galatians 4:16, Paul says, "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? Does that make me an enemy because I told you the truth? It's the greatest thing I could ever do for you is tell you the truth."

So James says, "When it comes to the word take every occasion to hear it. Be very reluctant to stand in the place of the teacher and speak it and very, very slow to be resentful." In other words, there may be an occasion when you do hear something that isn't true and you need to take issue with it and be very slow to a negative reaction.

Why? Verse 20, "Because the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." And what is the purpose of teaching the word? To produce what? The righteousness of God. What does that mean? To make you right with God.

The purpose of teaching the word is to make you right with God. And it can't happen if you're fighting it, if you're resenting it, if you have this evil attitude. That's why Proverbs 16:32 says that, "He who is

slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who rules his spirit than he who captures the city."

Proverbs 19:11 says, "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger." You don't want to be resentful toward the word of God. You don't want to fight back. And that's easy to do that.

I can even be sitting and listening and somebody will say something that is convicting to my own heart about a shortcoming in my own life and I have an initial sort of self defensive mechanism that goes into place and I resist that. The true believer desires to hear the word, speak the word only when compelled to do so and prepared to do so, and never exhibit any hostility or smoldering resentment or rebellion against biblical truth or the one who teaches it.

So first of all, you receive the word with submission. Secondly, here's how to receive the word. You receive the word with purity. Look at verse 21, "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness."

I mean this is so basic. Sin hinders the work of the word. That's why 1 Peter 1 says, "The word was preached to you. You were saved by it." 1 Peter 2 says, "So put aside all remaining evil, all guile, all hypocrisy, all envy, all slander and then like a newborn baby long for the pure milk of the word that you may grow by it."

But before you're going to be able to take in the word and grow by it you're going to have to deal with sin because sin is a barrier. Verse 21 talks about receiving the word. That's the main verb. The main verb is the verb receive -- receive.

But there is a participle that modified the main verb and that participle is putting aside that defines how you receive. That's the syntax of the verse if you're into grammar. The main verb is the main verb which carries the main action. It's a verse about receiving the word.

How to receive the word? Putting aside is the participle that modifies the main -- it's actually an aorist middle participle it should be read, "Having already put aside receive the word." The point is before the word can be received and produce the righteousness of God, which is what it wants to produce; sin has to be dealt with it.

Now, notice what he says about it some pretty graphic terms here putting aside. That verb came to refer to taking off your clothes. Now you come home from the end of a difficult day, dusty or muddy roads, dirt roads in the Middle East. You came home from hard labor in the hot sun sweaty and filthy from the dirt and from the menial task of working the land in Agrarian culture.

You came home and you threw off those filthy clothes at the end of the day that's the imagery here. All filthiness, ruparia, it's a word used for dirty clothes. It's a word used for filth and scum that gets on the body when you're out in the dirt and you're working. And it came metaphorically to refer to moral vice to inequity sinful filth.

But it's a very interesting word. The root word, rupas, which were seeing the word here ruparia but the root word rupas is used in the writings of Hypocrites and Clement to refer to wax in your ears -- the wax in your ears. How interesting.

Get rid of any dirt that accumulates and plugs up your ears so you can't hear the word. You can become deaf because of accumulated wax; death because of the accumulated sin. Throw it off. Get rid of it.

Romans 13:12 Paul says, "Put off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." Take off the filth in your life. When I look at someone who has no particular appetite for the word of God, no particular longing to be where the word of God is taught. No big hurry to get under the sound of preaching and teaching. No great passion to study Scripture.

I conclude one of two things is true; one, they're not Christians. They don't really know the Lord because they don't have the love of the truth or two their ears are plugged. They have no interest in hearing and what plugs them is sin -- sin.

Then he adds as if it weren't enough to say putting aside all filthiness, "All that remains of wickedness." That phrase is interesting. All is very important. Get rid of all remaining wickedness. Wickedness is a word for general evil. It includes not only the evil act but the evil intent, the evil thought, the evil heart.

When it translates all that remains that's actually the term overflowing. All overflowing, all abundance, all amount of evil that's still there. Get rid of it. It refers to whatever evil still resides in our humanness. It's a cancer that has to be cut away. It's a wax that plugs our ears. It's a garment that's filthy. It has to be thrown off. The whole filthy, ugly, dirty mass of wicked, moral, vice and sin must be confessed, repented and removed. That's how you have to receive the word.

And if you have no interest in the word it's because you're rebellious or sinful. It's because you're not submissive or you're not pure. Thirdly, James says there's a third aspect to receive the word. We have to receive the word with humility. Verse 21, "In humility receive the word."

Another reason you don't want to listen to the word of God is you're proud. You have your own spin on life. You have your own answers. You don't need it. A submissive, pure, heart with a humble attitude.

It's like the Pharisees who had such a readiness of mind to search the Scriptures. Receive, it's a command. Receive the word but receive it in purity and submission and in humility. By the way, that word humility really has the idea of humble, gentle, meek and willing. Receive it with meekness, gentleness, a willing spirit.

I suppose we could say what he means here is be teachable -- be teachable. It's an active kind of teachability where you really want to know and you want to submit your heart and soul. Now what is it we're receiving? I just have to close the verse with a look at this the word implanted. The word implanted.

Now we live in a day where we hear a lot about implants, right? I don't want to get into this too much. But the other day on television I saw what I thought has got to be the ultimate, men having implants in strange places.

Some men have implants in their face but the new implant is in your calf. For men who like to wear shorts and wow the ladies with some kind of shaped calf. You can have an implant in your calf. How wonderful.

Now look I have an implant and so do you if you're a Christian. It's right here. It's the implanted what? Word. Forget the calf. Forget that deal. I'll go for this one; the implanted word. When was it implanted? Wow, when did you have your surgery? I had mine when I was saved. So did you. And the word got implanted. It's there.

The resident author of Scripture lives in me. Is that not true? I mean I have the word and I have the author in me to interpret the word. The preaching of the gospel mixed with faith implanted the word in my heart. And now that word is there and it's a vital element of my new life and my new nature. But the power and the affect of this routed word is dependent on my ongoing willingness to receive it.

Right? I mean I guess the tragedy of all tragedies is to have the word implanted and be indifferent to it. You know I never cease to be amazed at the fact that I can pick up my Bible and as I begin to read the Bible I have the confidence that the spirit of God, the living spirit of God dwelling within me, is illuminating his own revelation. That's the implanted word.

The power of the word and the affect of the routed word is dependent on my receiving it. And what compels me to receive it? The end of the verse. It's able to save my soul or my life. What does he mean by that? It is the source of salvation past, present and future. It is the source of my justification, sanctification, glorification.

It is the word that continually delivers me from sin, continually saves me from myself from my sin, continually conforms me to the image of Jesus Christ. That's what he means. 1 Corinthians 1:18, "We are being saved by the power of God." And it's the word that does that. It's the word that sanctifies and nurtures and builds us up.

As Paul told the Ephesians' elders, "It's the word that builds us up and gives us an inheritance." He's not talking about salvation here. He's talking to already saved believers and telling them the word has already been implanted and now if you will receive it, it'll continue on the path of salvation all the way to glorification.

The word has power to continually deliver us from sin and to deliver us into the very presence of God. So the whole section there in verses 19 to 21, "Is a call to the Christian to a right reception of all the truth of God's word that you have to listen with a submissive heart. You have to listen casting off all sin and humbling yourself in obedience." That's the issue.

When you do that you mark yourself out as a true believer and you throw open the gates of blessing. We should be like Mary. Luke 10:39 says "She sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word." We don't want to be like the crowd. Remember the crowd that stoned Stephen in Acts 7 it said, "They cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears."

We want to be like Cornelius who said to Peter, "We are all here present before God to hear all the things that are commanding you from God." Acts 10:33, "We should be like the noble Barians who

received the word with all readiness of mind." Not like those of whom Paul spoke in 2 Timothy 4:3, "Would turn away their ears from the truth." James makes a great point of a proper reception of the word secondly; a proper reaction to the word.

And now that we've received it, how do we respond to it? Verse 22, "Prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves." It's fine to receive it but in the end what really matters is doing it. It's important to hear but it's not enough to hear.

The word, listen now, that is powerful enough to totally transform the whole person, powerful enough to sanctify you must be obeyed. You not only have to take it in you've got to put it back out again in your living. Be ye doers or prove yourselves literally doers of the word as the NAS puts it.

Be ye continually doers of the word. Builders build and teachers teach and doers do. You should be known as a doer of the word because that's your life habit. One writer said, "It's a life of holy energy." And not merely a hearer like so many. By the way, the word for hearer here it's the ancient term for auditors.

Now at the Masters' College and the Masters' Seminary we have people who show up and they want to audit a class. You know what that means, right? That means you want to listen but not apply. It just means you don't want to do any of the work. You just want to sit there and listen.

Well, do you know there are Christians who just audit the Bible? They listen. They hear. But they have not commitment to do. Now they are deluded. They may be so deluded they may be saved. There should be a willingness to apply the word of God so that you're not merely a doer -- not merely a hearer rather but a doer; otherwise you have deluded yourself.

By the way, the word delude -- there's a lot of great words. And James has many that are unique but the word to delude is used in Mathematics to refer to a miscalculation. They got it wrong. They reckoned it wrong. They miscalculated. They were self-deceived through fallacious reasoning. They believe they're okay when the fact is they're not.

Now in order to explain this truth of doing James takes an analogy. And it's just a great analogy. Look at it in verse 23. Now here's his analogy to explain his point. You have to not only receive it but you've got to react to it respond to it. "Anyone -- if anyone is a hearer of the word, not a doer -- here's his little parable -- his little analogy, "he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror." Now that's pretty clear, right?

He says, "The person who just hears and doesn't do is like a guy who looks in a mirror and he sees his natural face." That simply means the face of his genesis or the face of his birth. That's him. You see yourself.

In those days, there was no glass. Glass didn't come till the Thirteenth Century in case you want a little trivia. But mirrors in those days were hand sized mirrors maybe a little bit larger made of polished bronze which is a combination of copper and tin. Made of silver for wealthy people and for really wealthy people made of gold. And gold could be polished pretty good and pounded pretty flat and so you could get a fair likeness.

Glass mirrors they didn't have. Those mirrors were not perfect. They of course had a little bit of wave in them that might distort somewhat. But people would use those mirrors, obviously, like people do today to make sure you don't go out and frighten the world.

Generally, adequate for an accurate view and see what you look like. So he says a person who is a hearer and not a doer is like somebody who looks in a mirror. And for once he had looked at himself and gone away. He's immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. Now we've all experienced that.

My phone rings always every morning when I'm shaving. And some days I go out there and I forget what I looked like when I left and I just finished getting dressed and leave. And the first shocked face makes me wonder. So I find a mirror and say, "Oh, this part didn't get shaved. This part didn't get combed. My tie is over here. The collar deals aren't button. I got different socks."

You know how that works because you never -- I took my wife out for a nice dinner the other night and I thought she was starting a new fashion. She had one long earring. She was in the middle of putting them on and got interrupted and forgot what she look like. And I reminded her in a nice way that I preferred the old style. I mean the symmetry.

How many times have you sort of -- and I've always wondered why they put the biggest mirror in the house in the bathroom where you stagger in and look the worst. You know if they had a graduated series of larger ones as you worked your way through the process.

But at some point you can go away from the mirror and forget what you look like. And you know how people show up at work like that occasionally or show up at school like that. God forbid some women even go out having forgotten their make-up.

Now this is like a hearer only. What does he mean by this? Verse 25, "One who looks intently at the perfect law," that's the Scripture. He wants to remind us that it's not a law like other laws. So he says, "The law of liberty." It's a freeing law.

"The one who looks intently at the Scripture and abides by it or remains in it or obeys it or applies it is not a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer," this man shall be what? "Blessed in what he does."

"The one who looks intently", notice that in verse 25. It's a different word than the word for look back in verse 24. It means to stoop down and look very closely with precision and care. And when you look into the word of God carefully, precisely, closely it implies a stooping intently with an eager effort to see the truth of God. To discern you or own the face to see what you're really like. To let the word of God reveal you to you.

When you look intently and long and it's not haphazard look and a distraction and you're gone. When you look long you're going to remember what you saw. And you're going to be able to apply it and you're going to be blessed. And his little analogy finds its meaning or the key to his analogy is in that phrase looking at the perfect law.

The mirror is the Bible. The mirror is the Scripture. It's the word of God. And when you look into the word of God intently and when you look into intimately. And you see the revelation of God and Christ

and the spirit and the truth and the revelation of your sinful ugliness and you see how desperately ugly you are and how much cleansing you need and how much repentance you need and how you need to throw off the filthy garments that you keep putting back on even though you're a believer. And you need to adorn yourself in the beautiful robes of righteousness when you look into the word of God intently that's exactly what you're going to see and you're going to reflect it in the way you live.

The hearer only listens, has a brief glance, walks away, forgets what he looks like and goes on his way and misses God's blessing. It was a momentary and untransforming impression but on the other hand, one who looks long and intently into the Scripture is going to definitely understand their life. And they're going to be able to apply the word of God to make that which is honoring to God a reality in their own living.

This man shall be blessed in what he does. God is so practical. Do you want to be blessed or unblessed? I'd rather be blessed. Wouldn't you? I'd rather be happy. I'd rather make my way prosperous and have good success than make my way miserable and have failure. Then that means I have to look intently into the law, the word. And by the way it's an easy yolk and a light burden.

When I was young I was in College. I remember these days vividly. I was dating Patricia at the time. I was playing football. And I was teaching a Bible study at my dad's church every Sunday morning. It was always hard to get up because football games on -- collegiate games were always on Saturday and we were beaten to a pulp. And I'd stagger in on Sunday mornings and get up and teach this Bible study to these college students. And I loved it. It was a great time in my life. But I always looked for an opportunity to find a guest speaker during football season because I was a wreck.

Those old days, some of played sixty minutes, we went from wire to wire in those games. And by the time we traveled back home or sometimes flew back home from wherever we were it was a just a very, very difficult time. Well, I invited this guy one time as a Scottish preacher by the name of Billy Stracken, a fiery little guy. And I had met him somewhere my dad introduced me to him. And I had him come and take my class.

And I was just really happy to just sit there and listen. And he poured out his heart and he preached real passion -- real fiery little guy, just a little guy. And I got a -- the class was over and I wanted to thank him because he was really taking my place and giving me a little break. And just a -- I was just a college kid. And I went up to him and I said Mr. Stracken I just want to tell you that was a wonderful message -- that was a wonderful message. And he looked at me and said yeah, well what are you going to do about it? That was exactly his response. No, he was right. I mean that is the appropriate contemplation but you could say it a little differently I suppose.

But I'll tell you one thing, I don't remember anything he said but that. And I'll go to my grave remembering that. And I remember the surroundings, I remember where I was standing when he said it because it about knocked me out. Yeah, well what are you going to do about it?

So my final words to you are -- but isn't that in the end the real question? Doing the word is the path of blessing. And how practical is it you say well, I -- what do you mean by that? Well, all right verse 26 and 27, we don't have time to dig into them but listen to it. "If anyone thinks himself to be religious doesn't bridle his tongue but deceives his hear this man's religion is worthless."

Here's the first practical way you do the word or you know you're doing the word. It'll show up in pure speech. You want to know whether you're a doer. Listen to what you say. Listen to your conversation. Listen to your words. Listen to your jokes. Listen to your rhetoric's. Listen to your conversations.

What comes out of your mouth? Lusty things, Godly things, things that exalt, lift up, honor Christ. Is your speech seasoned with grace? Because when you're an obedient believer and you're not just taking the word in but you're putting in back out. It'll show up in your speech because out of the abundance of the heart, what? The mouth speaks.

Secondly, it'll show up in your relationship to others. This is pure and undefiled religion verse 27, "In the sight of our God and father to visit orphans and widows in their distress." If you want to know whether a person is a doer listen to what they say and watch how they deal with people in need.

You'll see the love of Christ in a doer. You'll see sacrifice. You'll see compassion. You'll see kindheartedness. You'll see tenderness. You'll see mercy. You'll see grace. And then lastly, at the end of verse 27, "Keep oneself unstained by the world."

What's that? Holy living. Godly living. Are you a doer? Pure speech, loving care, holy living. If the word is coming in and your hearing it right and you're actually doing it those three areas will demonstrate it. What you say, what you do toward others, and how you live toward God. That is the belief that behaves. That's the right response to the word.

And I suppose I would be honest and say that I have a fear that the more you hear the word and the more you don't apply it the more you train yourself to ungodliness because it just kind of rolls off like water on a duck's back.

There is a way to receive the word with submission, and purity, and humility. And there's a way to respond to it by being a doer of the word. It'll show up in your speech, your relationships, and your godliness. That's why we do what we do that you might be blessed.

Father, thank you for our time this morning. Thank you again for reminding us of the centrality of your word and the need to be hearers and doers not just hearers only.

I thank you for this congregation, this great, great group of people who love you and who do respond to the word so wonderfully.

And I thank you for those faithful ones. I pray for those who are not. And I pray that all of us would be discontent no matter how faithful we are with the fact that we ought to be more faithful, more diligent.

But Lord I am not ungrateful for a congregation of people who love the word and love to live it and I thank you for that. And I commend these people to you for blessing who are indeed obedient but Lord make us even more that way.

Forgive us for those times when we are not and continue to increase our love to hear the word

because in it you speak and through it you bless. And what fool wouldn't choose to be so blessed.
We commit this word these hearts to you in Christ name. Amen.

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