

INTRODUCTION.

A couple weeks ago, ~ we began to look at James' discussion of hearers & doers of God's word.

THE PARAGRAPH CAN BE DIVIDED ~ INTO 2 SUBSECTIONS.

▶▶1st, ~ James gives an exhortation and a warning ~ regarding embracing and practicing the word, ~ vv 21-22.

▶▶2nd, ~ he elaborates on the problem with mere listeners of the word.

▷▷And contrasts ~ the mere listener ~ with the ~ doer of God's word. ⇨⇨ vv 23-25.

LAST TIME LOOKED @ THE 1st SUBSECTION. ~ 21-22. ⇨⇨ 2pts. ~ exhortation & warning.

▶▶1st, ~ in verse 21, ~ exhortation ~ to get rid of ~ all moral filth ~ and the evil that is so prevalent ~ ¶¶

▷▷and humbly accept the word planted in us, ~ which can save us.

▷▷James chose a word, ~ filthiness, ~ that reminds us ~ ¶¶

↳↳just how offensive and detestable ~ sin really is ⇨⇨ How God views

↳↳And James tells us ~ that ~ we must rid ourselves of all ~ moral filth, ~ ¶¶

→→all that is morally defiling, ~ as inconsistent with the Christian life. ¶¶ 1/13

▷▷ James also told us that we must rid ourselves of the evil that is so prevalent.

↳↳ James ~ was stressing the point ~ that sinfulness ~ 77

→→ is present in our lives ~ in abundance.

↳↳ My ..., ~ we must never become comfortable ~ with our sinfulness.

↳↳ Rather, ~ we must ~ face up to the fact ~ that our Christian commitment ~ 77

→→ allows no tolerations ~ of impurity in our lives.

▷▷ The ridding of these things from our lives ~ is to be accompanied ~ by the receiving ~ of something else.

↳↳ Namely, ~ the implanted word.

→→ Specifically, ~ the word of God.

↳↳ This is not ~ a command ~ to be converted.

↳↳ Rather, ~ it is a command ~ to accept the word's precepts as binding ~ 77

→→ and to seek to live by them.

↳↳ Believers are to prepare good ground ~ in our heart ~ in order that ~ 77

↳↳ the seed of the word ~ that has been planted there ~ 77

→→ might produce much fruit. 11 2/13

↪↪ Able to save you

▶▶ Then in *verse 22*, ~ James gives us a warning.

▷▷ But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

▷▷ According to James, ~ however important may be ~ mental assent to the word, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ it has not been truly received ~ until ~ it is put into practice.

▷▷ Those who fail ~ to practice/obey the word, ~ who are *hearers only*, ~ are guilty ~ ¶¶

▶▶ of a dangerous and potentially fatal ~ self-delusion.

▷▷ Those who hear but do not put the word into practice ~ ¶¶

↪↪ think that they have a relationship with God ~ because ~ ¶¶

→→ they regularly ~ attend church, ~ go to Bible studies, ~ or read the Bible.

▷▷ But ~ if their listening is not accompanied by obedience, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ their true situation before God ~ is far different.

▷▷ Something to give some serious thought to.

TODAY WE'LL FINISH OUR LOOK AT JAMES' DISCUSSION OF HEARERS & DOERS.

2nd SUBSECTION, ~ VSS 23-25. ¶¶ 3/13

AS NOTED, ~ IN THIS SUBSECTION ~ JAMES ELABORATES ON THE PROBLEM WITH mere listeners ~ ¶¶

▶▶and contrasts them ~ with the doers of the word.

RECALL ~ AT THE START OF OUR STUDY OF JAMES, ~ WE NOTED ~ ¶¶

▶▶the relationship between ~ James ~ and Jesus' sermon on the mount.

▶▶Many parallelisms exist ~ between the two.

▶▶James did not actually quote the Lord's words, ~ ¶¶

▷▷but he obviously ~ had internalized Jesus' teachings ~ and reproduced them ~ with spiritual depth. ⇔⇔ Look for in reading.

WELL, ~ IT MAY BE OBSERVED ~ THAT JAMES' IMAGERY ~ ¶¶

▶▶of people looking in a mirror ~ and forgetting what they look like ~ is similar ~ ¶¶

▷▷to the parable ~ of the two builders ~ at the conclusion of Jesus' sermon.

▶▶Both passages emphasize ~ the importance ~ of putting the gospel message ~ into action.

▷▷Matt 7:24-27. ~ 24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." ¶¶ 4/13

OK, ~ LET'S DIG IN ~ TO THE 2nd SUBSECTION.

VERSE 23.

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

IN VS 22, ~ JAMES EXHORTED US TO BE ~ DOERS OF GOD'S WORD, ~ ¶¶

▶▶and not hearers only, ~ deceiving ourselves.

▶▶He begins vs 23 ~ with the conjunction ~ For ~ or ~ Because, ~ ¶¶

▷▷giving the reason ~ for the injunction ~ not to be ~ mere hearers.

THE PERSON WHO REMAINS ONLY A HEARER ~ IS COMPARED ~ ¶¶

▶▶to a person ~ who observes their natural face in a mirror ~ and does nothing about it.

THE GRK WORD TRANSLATED ~ "WHO LOOKS INTENTLY AT" ~ MEANS ~ ¶¶

▶▶to perceive clearly; ~ to be fully aware of through thoughtful viewing; ~¶¶

▷▷realize with the eyes and mind.

▶▶So James ~ is not talking about ~ simply ~ glancing at a mirror and immediately walking away.

▷▷Is staring at his own face in a mirror. ¶¶ 5/13

MIRRORS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD ~ were generally made of polished ~ bronze or copper.

▶▶ And they produced ~ dim and warped reflections.

▶▶ While one could gain a good impression of oneself, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ one could not simply glance ~ at such a mirror and learn much.

SO ONE WOULD HAVE TO ~ CONSIDER CAREFULLY ~ ¶¶

▶▶ what one saw in a mirror.

▶▶ What was seen in a mirror ~ was meant ~ to lead to action, ~ usually regarded as corrective.

▷▷ E.g., ~ a dirty face that needed washing.

▶▶ Yet here ~ this person goes away ~ and fails to deal with the flaws ~ that the mirror revealed.

IN VS 24, ~ JAMES CONTINUES TO DEVELOP THE ANALOGY ~ BY ADDING THAT ~ ¶¶

AFTER THE HEARERS CONSIDER THEIR FACE INTENTLY, ~ THEY DEPART AND FORGET.

▶▶ The question is, ~ What is James doing with this illustration?

▶▶ I suggest ~ that he is using ~ a deliberately ~ ridiculous analogy.

▷▷ IOW, ~ he's pointing out ~ the absurdity ~ of such behavior. ¶¶ 6/13

▶▶No one in their right mind ~ who examines their image that closely ~ 77

▷▷would then utterly neglect the flaws they discover ~ and instantly forget ~ whatever they had seen.

↪↪Dirty face (greasy face/nice restaurant)

LIKEWISE, ~ JAMES SEEKS TO STRESS ~ HOW LUDICROUS IT IS ~ 77

▶▶for people so rapidly to ignore and forget ~ what they have heard from God's word.

▶▶Picture the absurdity of a person ~ who examines intently his very own face in the mirror.

▷▷But within seconds ~ he cannot even pick himself out of a police lineup.

▶▶To treat God's Word ~ in such a careless fashion ~ remains equally ~ absurd.

▶▶TPID, ~ the person who hears the Word of God ~ 77

▷▷and does not put what he hears into practice ~ is just as ludicrous ~ as the person in James' analogy.

IT IS ALSO ~ A VERY DANGEROUS POSITION TO BE IN.

▶▶That the mere hearer is hearing God's word ~ implies ~ that this person claims to be a believer.

▷▷But their lack of putting the word into practice ~ 77

↪↪puts the lie ~ to their claim. 77 7/13

▶▶ Soon, ~ James will spend a great deal of time ~ showing that ~ lack of works ~ disproves ~ one's claim to faith.

▶▶ And in his first epistle, ~ John make it abundantly clear ~ that obedience to God's word ~ is a sign of true faith.

▷▷ 1 Jn. 2:3-4 (NIV). ~ ~ ³ We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. ⁴ Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

▷▷ John says repeatedly ~ that anyone who is truly in Christ will obey him.

▷▷ John's concern is for his readers ~ to recognize the telltale signs ~ of one who knows God.

▷▷ If someone shows no concern to submit to God's commands, ~ ↴ ↴

↴ ↴ we must question ~ the spiritual state ~ of that person.

IN CONTRAST TO THE MERE HEARER, ~ JAMES NOW DESCRIBES ~ the true hearer in vs 25.

AS WE'LL SEE, ~ THE TRUE HEARER ~ IS A PERSON ~ WHO BOTH ~ hears and practices ~ God's word.

▶▶ And is rewarded for it.

▶▶ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

THE VERB FOR ~ WHO LOOKS ~ DENOTES ~ PENETRATING ABSORPTION. ↴ ↴ 8/13

▶▶ The same word ~ is used to describe Jesus' disciples ~ looking intently ~ ¶¶

▷▷ into the tomb ~ to see whether it was really empty.

▶▶ Here in [James 1:25](#) ~ it is as though ~ a person stoops over the Scripture, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ zealously ~ searching for its message.

▶▶ The Grk could be translated this way.

▷▷ But whoever ~ looks intently ~ into the perfect law (NIV).

▷▷ Also be expressed as, ~ whoever studies the perfect law ~ carefully.

NOTICE THAT JAMES DESCRIBES GOD'S WORD AS ~ PERFECT.

▶▶ The word ~ perfect ~ is best understood as ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "complete," ~ "wholesome," ~ "all-encompassing," ~ and "good."

▶▶ In [Ps. 19](#), ~ David also notes the perfection of God's word.

▷▷ And then expands ~ using a number of synonyms for God's word.

▷▷ He says, ~ The law of the Lord ~ is perfect, ~ The testimony of the Lord ~ is sure, ~ The precepts of the Lord ~ are right, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ The commandment of the Lord ~ is pure, ~ The rules of the Lord ~ are true, ~ and righteous altogether. ¶¶ 9/13

▶▶ Totally unlike human-made laws

JAMES FURTHER CHARACTERIZES GOD'S WORD AS ~ THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

▶▶ The Grk text ~ could be expressed a couple of other ways as well.

▷▷ The perfect law ~ that gives freedom; ⇔⇔ or, ~ The perfect law ~ that sets you free.

▶▶ At first glance, ~ law and freedom ~ seem completely antithetical.

▶▶ However, ~ God's word gives freedom ~ because ~ it is only in obeying his word ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that true freedom ~ can be found.

▷▷ Jn. 8:31-32. ~ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

▶▶ Obeying our emotions ~ and giving in to all our desires ~ is true slavery.

▶▶ But in accepting God's will, ~ we are truly free ~ to be what God created us to be.

▷▷ Believers respond to God ~ because we want to, ~ not because ~ we have to.

↳↳ We are free to obey.

▶▶ And as John tells us in his 1st epistle, ~ God's commands are not a burden.

NOW JAMES TURNS BACK ~ TO THE TRUE HEARER OF GOD'S WORD. ¶¶ 10/13

MOVING ON IN VS 25, ~ JAMES TELLS US ~ THAT THE ONE ~ WHO STUDIES GOD'S word carefully, ~ perseveres.

▶▶ Here James characterizes the true hearer ~ as one who ~ continues ~ their careful study of God's word.

▷▷ IOW, ~ it's a lifelong habit.

▶▶ They are like the righteous person described in Ps. 1.

▷▷ His delight ~ is in the law of the Lord, ~ and on his law ~ he meditates day and night.

↳↳ "Meditates" means ~ intensive, ~ careful ~ reading and study.

▶▶ James' point?

▷▷ The true hearer of God's word ~ continues ~ in ~ ¶¶

↳↳ intensive, ~ careful reading and study ~ of God's word.

AND, ~ UNLIKE THE LUDICROUS ACTIONS ~ of the person peering into the mirror, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ this one ~ does not forget, ~ and ~ they act ~ on what they see.

▶▶ IOW, ~ the true hearer ~ of God's word ~ gives serious attention to it ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and then makes it ~ their chosen life-style.

▶▶ They ~ willingly and gladly ~ live out ~ God's word. ¶¶ 11/13

AT THE END OF VS 25, ~ JAMES NOTES ~ A RESULT ~ OF BEING A HEARER AND A DOER
of God's word.

THAT PERSON WILL BE BLESSED.

▶▶I.e., ~ they will experience ~ true happiness.

BEFORE AND BEARS REPEATING.

▶▶God doesn't give us ~ a bunch of commands ~ simply because ~ he wants us to obey ~ a bunch of commands.

▷▷He's not some ~ cosmic killjoy ~ who wants to restrict our freedom ~ or to prevent us from having fun.

↪↪This ~ is what Satan, ~ the world, ~ and our sin nature ~ would have us believe.

▶▶Far from it.

▷▷Every one ~ of God's commands in Scripture are: ~ for our good, ~ 77

↪↪help us grow spiritually, ~ and ~ help us become more and more like Jesus.

▶▶And ~ when we obey his commands, ~ far from feeling restricted ~ or miserable, ~ 77

▷▷we will find ~ incredible freedom and joy.

▶▶A genuine believer ~ is never more miserable ~ 77

▷▷than when we are not following ~ our Lord's word. 77 12/13

▷▷ Sin ~ brings only ~ a fleeting period ~ of happiness.

▷▷ But ultimately ~ sin brings ~ misery and inner turmoil ~ into our lives.

↳↳ David recalled the time after he sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, ~ 77

→→ when he kept silent ~ and refused to confess his sin to God.

↳↳ Ps. 32:3-4 (CSB).

→→ When I kept silent, ~ my bones ~ became brittle ~ from my groaning all day long. ~ For day and night ~ your hand was heavy on me; ~ my strength was drained ~ as in the summer's heat.

▶▶ On the other hand, ~ a genuine believer ~ is never more happy ~ 77

▷▷ than when we are walking by the Spirit, ~ i.e., ~ according to God's word.

↳↳ Ps. 119, ~ verses 1-2, ~ Blessed ~ [or, ~ How happy] ~ are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed ~ [or, ~ happy] ~ are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

↳↳ And Ps. 119, ~ verse 165, ⇔⇔ Great peace have those ~ who love your law; ~ nothing ~ can make them stumble.

AGAIN, ~ THE OLD HYMN.

▶▶ Trust and obey, ~ for there's no other way ~ to be happy in Jesus, ~ 77

▷▷ but to trust and obey. 13/13