

OUTLINE ... (JAMES 1:19–27 ESV)

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1. WE HAVE TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD, JAMES 1:19-21.

Know this ...

- We will only hear the word of God when we make a conscious decision to hear God first and above all else, 1:19.
- We will only hear the word of God when we come to understand that our anger—our strong displeasure—does not fit the righteous purpose and plan of God, 1:20.
- We will only hear the word of God when we prepare to receive his word through cleansing and humility, 1:21.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 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. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

2. WE HAVE TO OBEY THE WORD OF GOD, JAMES 1:22-24.

- If we hear the word and then do not obey the word, then we deceive ourselves. Can it really be stated any clearer than that? If we hear the word, and then do not obey the word, we fool ourselves with our human intention. “Look what I’m doing. Reading my Bible everyday; studying my Bible; following along with the preacher’s message on Sunday morning ... turned to all the references ... took notes.”
- This is our pride telling us that we can come to God’s truth by our own means. But the knowledge we gain not only does not improve our vision but confuses us even more. We cling to the person we have imagined ourselves to be because we don’t remember what we saw. We looked intently into the mirror (the word of God) but didn’t obey, and now we have forgotten what we saw.
- **Why?** Because when we look in the mirror, we only see what we see on our own. We do not see what God sees, and we do not see what God would reveal to us about our lives if we were walking in obedience to him. When we “do the word,” we see ourselves for who and what we are because God is using this real-time information to transform us by the renewing of our minds in moment-by-moment obedience to God.
- Peter touches on this principle in 1 Peter

1:22 ESV: *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.*

- When we do not walk in obedience, then this purifying is not taking place. The vessel is corrupted because it has not been cleaned (see 1:21), and we only see ourselves in the abstract.
- **What do I mean by that?** The corrupted vessel only sees the “theoretical” or “conceptual” version of himself or herself. His Christianity exists as a thought or an idea but not in the concrete reality of his life.
- “Abstract” is from a Latin word meaning “pulled away, detached.” This person is detached from the reality of who she actually is because once she steps away from the mirror, she loses her only reference point to the truth of God. Her perceived reality is not drawn from her actual life—how she thinks, talks, maintains relationships, etc.—but from an image she saw in the mirror which she has now forgotten.
- The picture this person now holds of himself does not represent reality. He has deceived himself by trying to view the reality of his life and this world on his own apart from God. He has refused God’s intervention by which God would have taught him through the discipline (practice) of obedience to distinguish between good and evil.

25 *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. 26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

3. WE HAVE TO PERSEVERE (CONTINUE) IN THE WORD OF GOD, JAMES 1:26-27.

- The one who gives his attention to the liberating truth of God’s word and who continues to act on that word will be blessed in what he does. This person knows the blessing of perseverance, the enduring work that God performs as he reveals himself to us, and as he reveals us to ourselves and transforms our lives by the renewing of our minds.
- The picture we need here is not the jumbled picture of the one who forgets the reality of his life, not the theoretical or conceptual person, but the person within whom God is doing his holy work.
- This is the person who does the holy work of God. Not the perfect person, but the person within whom God is doing his holy work. Do you see? Holy work performed inside (transformation by renewing) yields holy work outside. Pretty cool, huh? This is not perfection, but it is purity. This person’s religion, his or her work for God, is pure and faultless before God.
- Holy work on the inside means holy work on the outside.