

Fact Sheet for **“Doers of the Word”**
James 1:22-27

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Before I get to James 1:22-27 I thought it would be good to remind ourselves of two verses a page or so back in our bibles (Hebrews 13:5-6). These verses became dear to Helen and I in an extended time of life when we had very little.

Money is so important for everyday life. With it we purchase food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. With it we also purchase the things we enjoy. But it can also bring out anger in us if we feel we are not getting what we want, or deserve. This can be true for everyone, including Christians. And this seems to be in the background of the book of James. The first half of chapter one, and indeed the whole book, would suggest that the trials, the temptations, the testings that James spoke about revolved around money. Christians were responding poorly and were getting angry. James, Jesus' half-brother and the senior pastor (elder) of the church in Jerusalem, would write...

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.

The implanted word is God's Word that you know. The salvation that James spoke of is what is called sanctification, a process where we grow in holiness and righteousness. This growth often occurs in those times when we are tempted by those desires that reside in us, when we are assayed (tested) by God, and when we respond rightly. And these three verses, James 1:19-21, actually begin a thought that continues through the rest of chapter one.

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. 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.

One of the bogs that Christians can get mired in is when we are growing in the knowledge of the Bible, but we are not letting God's Word penetrate deep into our souls and choosing to let it change us as God would have. This is why we speak of daily “devotions” and not just daily “study”. God designed his Word not just to inform us, but to reform us. Take time to read Hebrews 4:12.

In James 1:25 James mentions “the law of liberty”. He also mentions this in 2:12. The Bible Knowledge Commentary describes it this way... “The ‘Law that gives freedom’ seems like a paradox. Law seems to imply restraint and therefore a lack of freedom. Not so with God's Law. His perfect Law provides true freedom. ‘Hold to My teaching,’ Christ said, ‘then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 8:31-32).”¹ The Expositor's Bible Commentary reads... “It is not merely the OT law, nor is it the Mosaic law perverted to become a legalistic system for earning salvation by good works. When James calls it the ‘perfect law,’ he has in

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 823.

mind the sum total of God's revealed truth..."² The "perfect law", the "law of liberty" is all the truth of God's Word.

The word translated "looks" in verse 25 actually means "looks intently". This suggests looking with the intent to apply. And it comes with a promise... God's blessing on your doing! Do you want God's blessing in your life? Here is a path to achieve that.

Let's put this in the context of the anger of verses 19-20. God's perfect law, his law of liberty, includes such things as the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, or what should be in our thoughts (Philippians 4:8). If we look intently into these verses with a view to applying them, then we will find that our anger melts away.

Next James has a statement that is very true, but for someone with an anger problem James' words may seem exceedingly harsh.

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Wow! The word "religion" means being "God-fearing" or "pious". You can imagine how their temptations over money were spilling out in their harsh comments to one another. In today's digital world this would include not only what we speak, but also what we text, post on Facebook, email, or leave on answering machines. It includes too the acronyms we use. Think through all of your communication. Does it speak of your Christian piety or something else?

James then gave two examples of true piety.

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.

Put the first example concerning orphans and widows in the context of James' day. There were no governmental security nets for these people. They were completely unable to provide for themselves. True piety called for the Christians of that day to use their own monetary resources to care for those who had no other way of providing for themselves. This stood in stark contrast to a "more for me" approach to life that many were tempted with. The plight of widows and orphans in that day was the reason that the church was feeding the widows in Acts 6.

This first example of true Christian piety related to their conduct. The second example of true Christian piety related to their character... to keep from being unstained by the world.

The context of this book would suggest that the problem James addressed revolved around wealth and the desire of his readers to accumulate it. Those who responded poorly became angry and made harsh comments to one another.

Here's the take-away. Look intently into God's Word with the view to applying what you see. James wrote statements of truth that we can properly apply to these and other trials and temptations we will face. This is one of God's key paths to blessing in your life. And monitor your communication. It is a window to your heart.

Are you being a doer of the word? How are you assaying out?

² The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 12, p. 176.