

# In One Ear, Out the Actions

James 1:19-27

7/26/2025

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Announcements:

## Scripture

James 1:19-27 (NKJV) [19] So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; [20] for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. [21] Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. [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 observing his natural face in a mirror; [24] for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. [25] But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. [26] If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. [27] Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Introduction:

If God gives good gifts to us, we ought to give good gifts to one another in mimicking the new creation. The one who has been brought forth and born again is obligated to live out their proclaimed faith in three areas:

Their words (What they say or don't say) Their walk (How they live) Their works (What they do)

One of the biggest misunderstandings about Christianity among Christians is that Christianity is only about confessing a set of doctrinal truths. James puts that misunderstanding to rest. He goes as far as to say that what we do puts to the test whether or not we sincerely believe the truths that we profess.

## Scripture

Psalms 15:1-2 (NKJV) [1] Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? [2] He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.

Words - When we need to listen, we aren't attentive, so we respond in a way that brings conflict rather than peace. Walk - When we need to pay attention to and heed the Word of God, we skim the surface, apply no attention or intention, and forget it before we put it into practice. Works - When we need to be attentive to what we practice as professing Christians, we are often quick to talk more about our religion than practice it.

In all these things, James tells us three separate times in the first chapter that we deceive ourselves and deceive our own hearts. We can honestly assess that James, chapter one, is a direct call for the Christian to break out of self-deception and into authentic, honest, and practical faith. Charles Spurgeon pleaded in one of his sermons:

## Quote

— Charles Spurgeon

"Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, let us strive to bring forth fruit unto God. The Lord will not be pleased with leaves; he expects fruits."

## Main Point

### Point 1

Authentic faith is cautious with words

## Scripture

James 1:19-20 (NKJV) [19] So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; [20] for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James' warning about the use of our words is repeated again in chapter three, and is a main theme of the book. James knows, as Jesus said, and as the proverbs declared, "that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."

Here in chapter one, we discover that the more reactionary we are with our words, the more likely we will not listen to understand, and the quicker we will be to enflame a situation with unrighteous anger rather than find a godly outcome. James tells us that the ultimate outcome we should seek in our conversations and conflicts is "The righteousness of God (verse 20)." The righteousness of God will not be the outcome if we don't take heed to three essential ingredients: Pausing our words Opening our ears Controlling our emotions

## Illustration

It's rightly been said that God gave us one mouth and two ears to illustrate the importance of doing twice as much listening as speaking.

## Application

When we are engaged in conflict or conversation, our tendency to rush into speaking and asserting our own thoughts and beliefs without taking the time to truly comprehend the situation or the person we are interacting with exposes the pride and self-centeredness that lurk within us. This inclination to prioritize our own opinions above all else can sow seeds of discord and hostility. Scripture warns us in Proverbs 18:2 that "a fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing his own opinion." When we allow ourselves to be driven by selfish desires and unchecked egos, we are setting the stage for strife and contention to take root. We must also have the wisdom to understand how deeply connected our emotions are to our words. Words can escalate tensions in a situation because they stir up our emotions. The more we listen to ourselves talk, the more we believe ourselves. The more we believe in ourselves, the more frustrated and angry we become when the other person doesn't agree with us or see things from our perspective. Proverbs 15:1 - "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." This is one of the reasons trials develop patience (earlier in chapter 1). When patience is at work within us, we are able to be patient in how we express our words and patient in how quickly we allow our emotions, namely anger, to escalate into fleshly, unrighteous reactions.

## Scripture

Colossians 4:6 (NKJV) [6] Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

How will you "know how to answer" if you refuse to listen with the intention of understanding? I can hear it now, "Well, the problem is that when I take the posture of listening, they never stop talking, and I never get to answer."

This is why God's wisdom should apply to "every man," or every person. Could you imagine two or more people working out a solution, trying to resolve a conflict, or coming up with a strategy, and all of their mentality was "I need to be careful about what I say, have a heart to listen to the other parties, and place a check on my emotional responses?" This would change marriages, friendships, and work environments. It would also change our prayer lives if we applied this principle to how we converse with God. But it always starts with me, not someone else. If I want the benefit of God's wisdom in my life, I need to be the one to work on it first: Slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to anger. If these things become common practice, the outcome will look less like the destruction that comes from my anger and more like the peace and healing that comes from God's righteousness.

## Main Point

### Point 2

Authentic Faith is Attentive to One's Walk

## Scripture

James 1:21 (NKJV) [21] Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

As we have seen many times in James, we see another contrast. Our faith should cause us to lay some things aside and let other things in. We are called to pluck some things and plant others.

Lay aside: filthiness and overflow of wickedness

## Illustration

Filthiness and wickedness produce within us a hard heart that is not willing (and sometimes unable) to receive the Word of God. Have you ever had to have your ears cleaned out? I swam for many years, and over the years, I never realized how much wax had built up in my ears. I'm also a musician. And frequently, there comes a point in time when everything starts to sound dull and muted. I remember the first time got my ears flushed out. I never knew that much wax could fit inside my small ear canal. I'll never forget the experience. It was painful and awkward, but after the wax came out, all of a sudden, I could hear in high definition; clarity returned. That's how it is with wickedness and sin in our hearts. When we root out the things in our lives that are not pleasing to the Lord, all of a sudden, our hearts hear God's Word and God's Spirit in high definition.

Receive with meekness the implanted word:

This is the application of the prior principle in relation to God. If I approach God's word being slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to anger, I can have meekness (selfless humility) to receive His wisdom and truth. The soil of my heart and mind will be ready to accept the seed of His word in a way that will allow it to take root and ultimately bear the fruit of salvation. Here we see a radical truth:

## Quote

— Pastor Josh

"The Word of God carries within it the power of God."

## Main Point

### Point 3

Authentic Faith Embraces True Work

## Scripture

James 1:22-25 (NKJV) [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 observing his natural face in a mirror; [24] for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. [25] But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Herein lies another area where people can be self-deceived about the quality of their faith. It can be easy to assume that if I heard God's word and felt convicted by God's word, that was enough to maintain my faith. We often judge our walk with Christ based on how we feel about something, or that we checked a religious activity off the list (ie: I read my Bible today, check).

James is clear: If hearing never leads to doing, then we are deceiving ourselves about the state of our relationship with God.

## Illustration

James likens God's word (Perfect Law of Liberty) to a mirror that reflects (image) an accurate image of who we truly are. There are some of us who would probably prefer to forget what we look like after we see ourselves in a mirror. But how silly would it be if I didn't know what color hair I have or what color eyes I have? If I didn't know those things, you would either think I was blind or that I had never actually seen myself.

## Application

Mirror: It reflects - A mirror only reveals the reality of what's already there. It is no respecter of what or who is in front of it. Have you noticed that we all tend to have an idea in our own minds of what we look like? Have you ever looked at a photo of yourself and been shocked that you look different from how you look in your own mind? Mirrors are honest; they show the discrepancies between what we've imagined ourselves looking like and what we really look like. It inspects - The closer you get to a mirror the more obvious your blemishes become. EXAMPLE: small hotel mirror. You wonder who walked out of a grave, and then you realize that it's you. It directs - A mirror allows you to see the areas that need to be addressed. Try getting ready without a mirror, and you will go out of the house without much self-confidence, because you don't really know how you look. The Word of God does the same things: It reflects back to you who you spiritually are, not the person you've invented in your own mind. It clearly reveals what's in your heart and mind. It inspects the deep areas of your life and thoughts. Sometimes you feel as though you read the Word and it's doing a close-up on your greatest blemishes. It directs you to God's way of doing things. It instructs you and allows you to develop a plan of action for addressing those areas. James tells us that obedience to the Word's direction yields favor and blessing as the outcome (fruit). This aligns perfectly with Psalm 1:

## Scripture

Psalm 1:1-6 (NKJV) [1] Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; [2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. [3] He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. [4] The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. [5] Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. [6] For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

## Application

Perfect Law of Liberty: In James 1:25, James refers to God's word as "the perfect law of liberty." This phrase carries rich theological implications and can be understood in several key ways:

1. **Perfect Law:** The term "perfect" (Greek: ἁ- » μ<sup>1</sup> ἰ Ἀ, *teleios*) implies This suggests that God's law, as revealed in Scripture, is fully sufficient for guiding believers in living a life that pleases Him. It is without flaw or deficiency, providing everything needed for spiritual growth and maturity.

2. **Law of Liberty:** This might seem paradoxical since laws are often associated with restrictions not freedom. However, James emphasizes that true freedom is found in living according to God's design. The "law of liberty" liberates believers from the bondage of sin and empowers them to live righteously. God's rules don't exist to put people into bondage, but rather to set them free from the bondage that comes through obedience to sin. This aligns with Jesus' teaching in John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

3. **Contrast with Legalism:** Unlike a legalistic adherence to rules, which can lead to bondage and self-righteousness, the "law of liberty" points to a joyful submission to God's will that brings true freedom and flourishing.

Finally, James reveals some practical examples of what authentic faith looks like when it goes from hearing to doing.

## Scripture

James 1:26-27 (NKJV) [26] If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. [27] Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The connection between the tongue surfaces again because James wants us to go beyond the kind of religion that talks about God, to the type that acts on the reality of what God has done. A religion of words is useless; that is, it has no practical or eternal benefit to others. The only thing words do is convince ourselves that we are better than we are, again deceiving our hearts.

## Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

We should not merely look at what we're SAYING, but how we're SERVING.

We see this connection between our words and our works all throughout the New Testament.

## Scripture

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NKJV) [20] For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

## Scripture

1 John 3:18 (NKJV) [18] My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

James gives us a practical example of the kind of religion that God sees, excepts, and blesses:

## Scripture

James 1:27 - [27] Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James is not suggesting that these two items encompass everything that God finds acceptable. No, his point is to provide relevant examples of what faith in action looks like: to ENGAGE those in need and to AVOID idolatry in this world.

## Application

We've heard it said, "God helps those who help themselves!" No! God helps those who help others who cannot help themselves. The Bible makes it clear. God is a father to the fatherless and a husband to the widows. He is the defender of the poor and needy and a refuge to those who are in trouble. Again, I don't believe James is limiting true religion to only helping "orphans and widows." I believe James is saying, "If you want to put your faith where your mouth is, get out there and start loving, serving, and helping people who need it the most. Help the helpless, love the unlovable, and heal the hurting." At the time James wrote this, orphans and widows were the most vulnerable population in the greatest need. While our responsibility is still to the widow and the orphan, it's also to the unborn life, to those who are truly poor, those who are abused and trapped in cycles of devastating sin. But to do this effectively, we must be unspotted from the world.

## Quote

"Worldliness always chokes out godliness."

You'll never be prepared to practice pure and undefiled religion if worldly lusts and pleasures taint your life, or your mindset is fixed only on the things of the world.

## Scripture

[2 Timothy 4:10] (NKJV) [10] for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.



## Application

A life that lacks the pursuit of holiness will increasingly struggle with selfishness, pride, or indifference, limiting one's ability to love others effectively. Conversely, as we grow in holiness, our capacity for genuine, sacrificial love increases. In essence, James suggests that spiritual (personal holiness) and physical (acts of service) aspects are deeply intertwined with each other. Our interior life with God fuels our exterior actions toward others. Without personal holiness, our efforts to love others might lack depth and authenticity.

Conclusion:

Our words, our walks, and our works... are they authentic? Do they reflect a sincere faith? Or is it possible we've deceived ourselves, inventing an image of our spirituality in our minds that doesn't align with the mirror of truth?

## Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

"Sincere faith does not demand perfection, but it does require progression."