

James 1:22–25 (NASB 2020)

²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ 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 a mirror; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the *law* of freedom, and has continued *in it*, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

19) Okay! We are going to start with a question this time.

When do we like looking in the mirror?

20) Obviously when we look our best.

- a) But, even then, sometimes we are not just really happy with what we see.
- b) For myself, the older I get the less mirrors are my friends regardless of looking my best or not.

21) What James is getting at here I think is this:

- a) If one stands in front of the mirror and sees that they have a big glob of spinach stuck in their teeth, one choice we would have is to turn and walk away and just forget about it.
- b) This is the kind of action I think James is talking about.
- c) Hearing the word, understanding it, and then not even attempting to do anything with it.
- d) One other choice we have here is to try to remove the piece of spinach.
 - i) Now, we may have to try several times before we get it all but as long as we keep “looking intently” into the mirror, it will tell us when we are good to go.
- e) This is what I think James means when he talks about “looking intently” into the law.
 - i) We may have a hard time finally accomplishing what we are convicted of by the looking but we will eventually get there if we keep trying.
 - ii) And by that “trying” we become DOERS of the word!

22) All this ties directly back to what we talked about a bit ago – God’s law is binding!

- a) We can’t just read it and say, “oh that’s nice” and move on just as we were before.

23) There is also a parallel here with the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:18–23 (NASB 2020)

The Sower Explained

¹⁸ “Listen then to the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown *with seed* beside the road. ²⁰ The one sown *with seed* on the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word,

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immediately he falls away. ²² And the one sown *with seed* among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³ But the one sown *with seed* on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty *times as much*.”

- a) Anything other than fertile ground is in some way turning away from the mirror.
 - b) The difference is that by continuing to look intently at what God wants us to do we in essence replant ourselves eventually in the required fertile ground.
- 24) There are several things that can qualify as turning away from the mirror.
- a) All of them really fall into one or more of the categories explained by our Lord in the parable.
 - b) Looking and ignoring what we see.
 - c) Looking and convincing ourselves that what we are seeing is not real.
 - i) In other words, looking at God’s will (commands) (the law) and disagreeing with what it is telling us.
 - d) Looking and telling ourselves that we will come back later (at a more convenient time) to fix the problem.
 - e) Looking and believing that we are too weak to take care of what we see so we won’t even try.
 - i) In the case of the law, not trusting God and the Holy Spirit to give us the strength we need to take care of the problem.
- 25) The real truth here is we must **never** stop looking into the mirror – looking at what God would have us do and the way He would have us live.
- 26) Then, do all in our power to remember what we see and “**be our best self in front of that mirror everyday.**”
- 27) One other comment here. I mentioned earlier that the older I get, the less mirrors are my friends.

Why should that not be the case when looking into the mirror of God’s law?

- a) In the case of “God’s perfect law” mirror, the older we get, the more we should be happy with what we see because we are maturing.
- b) Maturing as a Christian looks good in that mirror – not so much in the real world’s mirror.

James 1:26–27 (NASB 2020)

²⁶ If anyone thinks himself to be religious, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this person’s religion is worthless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

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28) The same word translated religious is used in all three places in these two verses.

- a) It refers to external religious rituals, liturgies, routines, and ceremonies.
- b) Josephus used the word in describing temple worship.

29) I think to move this into our world, we would simply say:

- a) Going to church, giving, taking communion, fellowshiping, attending bible classes, or journey group and anything else that might fall into this type of activity.

30) Now, if we were to step out of the literal and into a broader scope when we consider the conclusion of verse 26 and all of verse 27, we could say:

- a) For vs. 26 – anything that we do that is not “in accordance with God’s will”.
- b) For vs. 27 – anything that we do that is reflective of our love for others as dictated by God.

31) To say it somewhat differently –

if we do all the “worship things” but we do not really follow God’s will for us – in other words, looking in the mirror and walking away – then God does not accept all the other stuff as having any meaning – it is worthless.

32) At the heart of all of this is love

- a) Love for God by keeping His word and living as He wants us to.
- b) Love for our fellow man shown in many different ways.

33) Truthfully, if we do stay with the very narrow perspectives that James gives us here, the results are the same.

Agree / Disagree ?

34) As we think about this, we may conclude that James is a little harsh or pragmatic in his assessment of the outcomes.

35) However, I would call our attention to a scripture that really backs up what he is saying and it may be even a little harder to think about.

Matthew 12:33–37 (NASB 2020)

Words Reveal Character

³³ “Either assume the tree *to be* good as well as its fruit good, or assume the tree *to be* bad as well as its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, express *any* good things? For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart. ³⁵ The good person brings out of *his* good treasure good things; and the evil person brings out of *his* evil treasure evil things. ³⁶ **But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment.** ³⁷ **For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**”

36) That to me is a very serious thing to contemplate.

37) Ok, moving on we begin chapter 2.

James 2:1–7 (NASB 2020)

The Sin of Partiality

¹ My brothers *and sisters*, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

38) We are going to stop right here for just a minute.

- a) This verse is very difficult to translate and I am not in favor of the NASB 2020's rendition of it.
- b) Here is the NIV of the same verse.

James 2:1 (NIV)

Favoritism Forbidden

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

39) I think we will leave it at that.

- a) The NIV is, in my opinion, the better of the two translations.
- b) Based on the context of the following verses I think it captures the meaning much better.

40) So, continuing...

² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring *and is dressed* in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good *place*," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers *and sisters*: did God not choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?

41) There is an indirect tie back to the discussion we had looking at verses 9-10.

James 1:9–11 (NASB 2020)

⁹ Now the brother *or sister* of humble *circumstances* is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰ but the rich person *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

42) In these verses which we covered previously, James is dealing with how we must consider ourselves in our own economic circumstances and where we should find our personal value.

43) In this present case the consideration is how we look at others and dealing with their perceived status in life – rich or poor.

44) The bottom line is when we look at people who we are in contact with and consider their status in life in how we deal with the person we have made a mistake.

45) In James' words we have made distinctions among ourselves and become judges with evil motives.

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a) Another very strong statement but true, nonetheless.

46) Now, to get some things out of the way though:

a) It is obvious that in truth we cannot treat these two individuals “exactly the same.” – they are different!

b) The rich person probably needs no financial help whereas the poor person may need help.

c) Their makeups are likely different in many ways – personality, education, etc.

d) However, to be clear, those things are different from what James is talking about here.

47) The true situation James is discussing is not how we deal with the person’s needs or lack of needs or even their differences.

48) It is showing a preference – it is treating the two individuals of different “means” differently in the exact same circumstances.

49) I think to state it clearly, it is a “showing favoritism to the one and not the other because of their status” that he is defining.

50) We need to unpack the rest of this before we move on.

51) First – we “become judges with evil motives”

What to you think James means by that statement – specifically, what are the evil motives?