

- 1) Picking up where we left off last week, let's take a look at verse 18.
- 2) This is another interesting verse that deserves some thought and a few comments.

James 1:18 (NASB 2020)

¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

- 3) “In exercise of His will” is simply indicating that this is a deliberate act on the part of God.
- 4) In fact, one translation gives...

¹⁸ Deliberating, he brought us forth by a word of truth ...⁶

- 5) If we consider the ***word of truth*** to be the gospel (this is most likely the proper interpretation) then the “***brought forth***” or “***gave us birth by***” refers to our salvation – our new birth as believers.
 - a) This then is an absolute example of a “perfect gift.”
 - b) We are first fruits because we are a new creation – we are no longer sinners separated from God – we are God’s children – free from blemish by His grace that sustains us.
 - c) The whole idea – the overarching theme of this letter – is how we are to live as first fruits in a fallen world – **demonstrating our faith**.
 - d) Living as first fruits is being examples of God’s perfect unblemished goodness.
 - e) We are to be role models of what He can do in our lives when we allow Him to.
 - i) That of course means showing forth the fruit of the Spirit as seen in Gal 5:22.
 - f) It is wonderful to be considered first fruits by God, but it is also a challenge to live as a first fruits example!

James 1:19–21 (NASB 2020)

¹⁹ ***You know this***, my beloved brothers *and sisters*. Now everyone ***must be*** quick to hear, slow to speak, *and* slow to anger; ²⁰ for a man’s anger does not bring about the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore, ridding *yourselves* of all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

- 1) As I studied this passage, I ran across an old expression which I had heard in a different form in the past, but it is so true and so appropriate here.

Two ears are given to us, the rabbis observe, but only one tongue: the ears are open and exposed, whereas the tongue is walled in behind the teeth.⁷

- 2) Of course, this passage speaks to this issue...

⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](#), vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 485.

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- 3) As always, we have a way of taking what God did on purpose to help us and turning it to something else.
 - a) Most of us use our tongue twice as much as we should and our ears half as much.
 - b) One other obvious facet of this is that when our mouth is engaged – we are talking – we tend to hear our own voice and not that of anyone who may be trying to speak to us.
- 4) There are actually two imperatives (commands) in this verse 19.
 - a) Although it may not seem so by most translations, the opening phrase “*You know this*” or in the NIV “*take note of this*,” is a command.
 - b) The BHGNT translates it “*Be certain*”.
 - c) Simply put – by stating it in the imperative, it says THIS IS IMPORTANT – IT IS NOT AN OPTION!!!
- 5) The other verb here that is an imperative is translated as “*must be*.”
 - a) The point in all that is to say this is not just a suggestion of a better way for us to be in conversations – it is THE way we MUST be in conversations!
- 6) When we consider these three traits separately, they are good on their own.
 - a) Regardless of the topic or conditions, I can’t think of a situation in which it would NOT be good to be quick to hear, slow to speak, *and* slow to anger.
- 7) However, here, James definitely ties them together.
 - a) Indeed, this may be another progression of sorts.
 - b) Violating either one of these traits (slow to speak or quick to listen) can lead to anger – that of course is the BAD result.
- 8) If we consider these traits in more detail, we find that being quick to hear and slow to speak are complementary.
- 9) The LABC ties this together nicely:

Constant talking keeps a person from being able to hear. Wisdom is not always having something to say; it involves listening carefully, considering prayerfully, and speaking quietly. When we talk too much and listen too little, we communicate to others that we think our ideas are much more important than theirs. James wisely advises us to reverse this process.⁸
- 10) The obvious truth is that we can violate these two without causing anger or getting angry, but it is still not Christ’s way.
- 11) James makes it clear that when anger does happen it is a bad thing.
- 12) He tells us that our “anger does not bring about the righteousness of God.”

So what are some reasons why anger does “not to bring about the righteousness of God”?

⁸ Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman, and Neil S. Wilson, [*James*](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 31.

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- a) There are several reasons this is true:
 - i) Anger, many if not most times leads to hurtful words.
 - ii) Anger makes us unable to stand up to God's ideal plan for us.
 - iii) Anger tends to be uncontrollable.
 - iv) Anger is inconsistent with Jesus' command to love our enemies.
 - v) Anger expresses the fact that we are not of the same mind.

13) Now I am sure no one here has a problem with any of this – right :<))

14) Seriously, I can bet that everyone has tried (**or is trying**) to change this situation for themselves at one time or the other (or wished they had).

Let's brainstorm some ideas we might try that would help us implement this commandment – Quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

15) Now, to finish out this passage, looking at verse 21 it seems almost **not** to fit when we first consider it...

²¹ Therefore, ridding *yourselves* of all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

16) However, when we see the “Therefore” or, in this case perhaps the better way to translate it might be “For this reason”, we know there is a connection.

17) Bruce Barton comments:

Progress in our spiritual life **cannot** occur unless we see sin for what it is, quit justifying it, and decide to reject it.

Agree / Disagree?

18) Barton continues by saying...

James's word picture here has us getting rid of our evil habits and actions like stripping off dirty clothes.⁸

19) And of course, the subjects of filthiness and wickedness refer to (but not limited to) the violations of the commands we just discussed.

20) Hard to listen to but fact, nonetheless.

21) James then says:

in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

22) You would almost think he is talking about someone being converted but that is not the case.

- a) He is talking to believers.
- b) What he is saying is accept God's word as binding.
- c) We need to accept the fact that we must try to live by it.
- d) We can't just read it and say, “oh that's nice” and move on staying just as we were before.
- e) In fact, James is going to talk about that very idea in the next set of verses we will discuss.

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- 23) This final phrase in this verse – “which is able to save your souls” – must be carefully considered as well.
- a) James is NOT saying that if we fail in our attempts our souls are lost.
 - b) Instead, he is saying that if we do not accept God’s commands for what they are i.e. we just say, “oh that’s nice” and ignore them then we are putting our souls in jeopardy.
 - c) If we were able to be perfect – never falling short of what God wanted – then He would not have had to send His Son to die for us.
 - d) Neither Christ’s sacrifice nor God’s grace would be needed!!

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.

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

When do we like looking in the mirror?

- 2) 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.
- 3) What James is saying here I think is this:
- a) If we stand in front of the mirror and see that they have a big piece of spinach stuck in our teeth, we have a couple of choices we can make.
 - b) One choice we would have is to turn and walk away and just forget about it.
 - c) This is the kind of action I think James is talking about.
 - d) Hearing the word, understanding it, and then not even attempting to do anything with it.
 - e) 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.
 - f) 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 and depending on the Holy Spirit.
 - ii) And by that “trying” we become DOERS of the word!
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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, 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.
- 6) There are several things that can qualify as turning away from the mirror.
 - a) Looking at and then ignoring what we see.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Looking and telling ourselves that we will come back later (at a more convenient time) to fix the problem.
 - d) Looking and believing that we are too weak to take care of what we see so we won't even try.
 - i) In this case we are not trusting God and the Holy Spirit to give us the strength we need to take care of the problem.
- 7) 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.
- 8) Then, do all in our power to remember what we see and **"be our best self in front of that mirror every day."**

In the situation we are talking about here can you think of a difference between a regular mirror and the mirror of the perfect law?

Hint: Can we see a bad heart valve in a regular mirror?

- 9) The idea is that we must not only look at the mirror to see that we are doing the right thing we must also look at the mirror in another dimension – is the right thing in our heart – our motive.

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10) 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.

Comments / Questions?