

# James 1:22-24 Commentary

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 See also [Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

## JAMES

### Faith for Living

Motives for Works	The Place of Works: Outward Demonstration of Inner Faith					Outreach of Works
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Trials & Temptations	Word & Works	Faith & Works	Tongue	Wars	Future	Others
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**Greek:** [Ginesthe \(2PPMM\)](#) [de poietai logou kai me monon akroatai paralogizomenoi \(PMPMPN\)](#) [heautous.](#)

**Amplified:** But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ASV:** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves.

**Hiebert:** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

**KJV:** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

**NLT:** And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Don't I beg you, only hear the message, but put it into practice; otherwise you are merely deluding yourselves. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Young's Literal:** and become ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves,

## **BUT PROVE YOURSELVES DOERS OF THE WORD: Ginesthe (2PPMM) de poietai logou**

- James 4:17; Matthew 7:21, 22, 23, 24, 25; 12:50; 28:20; Luke 6:46, 47, 48; 11:28; 12:47,48; John 13:17; Ro 2:13; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:17; 1 John 2:3; 3:7; 3 John 1:11; Rev 22:7
- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passages:**

Luke 6:46+ "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and **do not do** what I say? 47 "Everyone who comes to Me and **hears** My words and **acts** on them (DOING DOES NOT SAVE BUT SHOWS WE ARE SAVED), I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

Luke 11:28+ But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

1 John 2:3+ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

1 John 3:7+ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

## **BECOME DOERS NOT JUST HEARERS**

**Prove yourselves** - is present imperative calling for the reader to keep on becoming doers of the Word (positive) and to stop being simply hearers of the Word (negative. See [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) this command.

James has just charged his readers to welcome the Word of Truth and in this section he elaborates on what it means to receive the Word, showing that genuine acceptance of the Word is marked by doing of the Word. To fall short of achieving that objective is to delude one's self into the attitude "I'm okay." To the contrary, the reality of one's faith (that he really is "Okay" with God!) is demonstrated by one's obedient life! In short, James says that our hearing must be balanced with and backed up by our doing.

Even Jewish rabbis like **Gamaliel** taught that "Not the expounding [of the law] is the chief thing, but the doing [of it]."

Later in this same epistle **James** makes a parallel statement...

Therefore, to one who **knows** the right thing to **do**, and **does not do** it, to him it is sin. (Jas 4:17)

**Jesus** said that...

whoever **does** the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother. (Mt 12:50)

But He said, "On the contrary (see Lk 11:27), blessed are those who **hear** (present tense = continually) the word of God, and **observe** (present tense = continually) it." (Lk 11:28)

If you **know** these things, you are blessed if you **do** (poieo - present tense = continually) them. (John 13:17)

In His the great commission **Jesus** reiterated the importance of hearing and doing charging His followers to go and make disciples...

**teaching** (present tense = continually) them to **observe** (present tense = continually) all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Mt 28:20)

**Paul** taught this same truth emphasizing that...

It is not the **hearers** of the Law are just before God, but the **doers** (poietes - same word James uses in this verse) of the Law will be justified. (Ro 2:13-note)

**Comment:** Paul was not teaching that a man is justified (declared righteous) by keeping the Law but that the one who is genuinely justified will show himself or herself to be justified by the fact that they are "doers of the Law." They "do" the Law, because it is now written in their hearts and they have the Holy Spirit abiding within to enable them to keep the Law. Their keeping of the Law does not save them but shows they are genuinely saved.

**John** also emphasized doing of the Word of Truth as a clear marker that one truly belongs to Christ, writing that...

by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep (present tense = continually, not perfectly for no man can do that in this life, but "keeping" as the general direction of one's life) His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep (present tense = continually) His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is (present tense = continually) not in him. (1Jn 2:3, 4)

**Comment:** Beloved, could it have stated any more plainly?! Beware of false teachers who claim you can "ask Jesus into your heart" and then go along your merry way for the rest of your life and never have a desire (or power) to obey the Word of Truth. Pithily put - The Truth is not in this person according to the apostle John! Do not be deceived by "another gospel" which is really not "good news" at all! (cp 1Jn 3:7 and Gal 1:6, 7, 8, 9).

**Hiebert** introduces this section of James with the comment that...

Wholehearted acceptance of the Word must result in active obedience to the Word. Such obeying of the Word constitutes the essence of a living faith. These verses express James's central concern. Jas 1:22, 23, 24, 25 state and illustrate the need for active obedience to the Word, and Jas 1:26, 27 portray the true nature of religious obedience. ([Commentary on James](#))

**Vance Havner** quipped that "We need an outbreak of holy heartburn, when **hearers** shall be **doers**, when congregations shall go out from meetings to do things for God."

**Illustration of Doers Not Just Hearers** - Europe is legendary for its beautiful cathedrals. The problem with many of these magnificent structures is that, while they possess physical grandeur, they are not inhabited by congregations that are spiritually vibrant. In reality, most of these edifices are nothing more than museums visited by gawking tourists. This phenomenon should remind us that the spiritual life is about internals, not externals (John MacArthur-Nehemiah)

**Barclay** - James presents us with two of the vivid pictures of which he is such a master. First of all, he speaks of the man who goes to the church meeting and listens to the reading and expounding of the word, and who thinks that that listening has made him a Christian. He has shut his eyes to the fact that what is read and heard in Church must then be lived out. It is still possible to identify Church attendance and Bible reading with Christianity but this is to take ourselves less than half the way; the really important thing is to turn that to which we have listened into action. Second, James says such a man is like one who looks in a mirror--ancient mirrors were made, not of glass, but of highly polished metal--sees the smuts which disfigure his face and the dishevelment of his hair, and goes away and forgets what he looks like, and so omits to do anything about it. In his listening to the true word a man has revealed to him that which he is and that which he ought to be. He sees what is wrong and what must be done to put it right; but, if he is only a hearer, he remains just as he is, and all his hearing has gone for nothing. James does well to remind us that what is heard in the holy place must be lived in the market place--or there is no point in hearing at all. ([James 1 - Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**But (1161) (de)** normally identifies a **contrast** but in this case functions to indicate that something must be added to what James has just said -- he is not interested in his readers just being hearers **but** also becoming doers of the Word of Truth.

**THOUGHT:** Whenever you encounter a "but" or other **contrast word (see note)**, take the opportunity to pause and ponder the text and ask at least one **5W/H** question - what is being contrasted? why? why now? etc. This will slow you down (cp Ps 46:10) and will allow your indwelling resident Teacher the Holy Spirit (1Cor 2:10-16, 1John 2:20, 27) to illuminate the sense of the passage and to speak to you.

**MacArthur** - Those who consistently disobey God's Word give evidence that they are without His life within them. Those who consistently obey the Word give evidence of the life of God in their souls. As noted several times in earlier chapters, that is the central theme of James's epistle... a true believer will not be inwardly satisfied with merely knowing the Word. His conscience and the prompting of the indwelling Holy Spirit will keep convicting him of his failure until he becomes obedient. (SEE [James MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 79](#))

**A R Fausset** writes that in this verse James gives the

Qualification of the precept, "Be swift to hear": "Be ye doers ... not hearers only"; not merely "Do the word," but "Be doers" systematically and continually, as if this was your regular business. James here again refers to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note, Mt 7:24, 25-note, Mt 7:26, 27-note, Mt 7:28, 29-note).

**Prove** (1096)(**ginomai**) means to become or to come into or bring into existence and in this verse the idea is we are to continually **become** doers or as Rotherham renders it "Become ye doers." **Doing** always supercedes simply **hearing**. Hear and heed is the point. Don't be a Word hearing, non-doing hypocrite - intellectually stuffed, but falling short of spiritual impact.

The **present imperative** calls for doing of the word to be the habitual practice or lifestyle of his readers. James demands that doing be their continual practice. Believers are never to stop being doers of the Word! Keep on striving to be doers. The **middle voice** adds a reflexive sense ("you prove yourselves"). The verb is second person plural so that he is speaking not just to individuals.

There is a deceptive danger in churches where the Word of Truth is faithfully preached, for many walk away with the mistaken concept that simply sitting under a godly, gifted pastor and listening to his message will automatically result in their spiritual growth. As someone has well said, too many believers **mark their Bibles** but fail to allow their **Bible to mark them** and direct their life. This is a dangerous deception in the modern day church. Never think you are "safe" and spiritually maturing simply because you are hearing the Word.

**Robby Gallaty** asks "Does Preaching Produce Disciples? Unfortunately, preaching alone will not produce disciples. Several years ago, I emailed disciple-maker **Avery Willis**, creator of Masterlife, inquiring about the role of preaching in making disciples. He graciously replied, "I really don't believe much discipling is done through preaching, Robby. Yes, you can impart *information* and *emotion* in preaching, but discipleship is more **relational**, more one on one... preaching to make disciples is like going to the nursery and spraying the crying babies with milk and saying that you just fed the kids." He went on to say, "I am not against preaching; I do it all the time. But Jesus chose twelve and lived with them, explained to them, gave them assignments, debriefed them... to shape and mold them to be like Him. His sermons no doubt helped convey the truth, but He had to follow up most of it with what I call discipling." Do not misunderstand me. I am not minimizing the importance of preaching. I have devoted my life to it. However, discipleship involves more than preaching and listening. It integrates intimate, accountable relationships that are rooted in the Word of God, which cultivates enduring, fruitful lives. After surveying the preaching in the New Testament, observing the practices of great preachers, and considering modern ministries today, **Peter Adam** came to this same realization. He determined that "while preaching... is one form of the ministry of the Word, many other forms are reflected in the Bible and in contemporary Christian church life. It is important to grasp this point clearly, or **we shall try and make preaching carry a load which it cannot bear**, that is, the burden of doing all that the Bible expects of every form of ministry of the Word." ([Growing Up- How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples- Robby Gallaty](#) - Recommended)

In His concluding remarks to the greatest sermon ever preached **Jesus** emphasized hearing and doing declaring...

Therefore everyone who **hears** these words of Mine, and **acts** upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who **hears** these words of Mine, and **does not act** upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." (Mt 7:24, 25-note, Mt 7:26, 27-note).

**MacArthur** writes that here James "is describing characteristic behavior, not occasional activity. It is one thing to fight; it is something else to be a soldier. It is one thing to build a shed; it is something else to be a builder. James is not merely challenging his readers to do the Word; he is telling them that real Christians are doers of the Word. That describes the basic disposition of those who believe unto salvation. ([Faith According To The Apostle James. In Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Volume 33, 1990](#))

**Doers** (4163)(**poietes** from **poieo** = to do, to make, to accomplish) describes one who does something as his occupation such as a producer, a poet or an author. The other sense describes a doer or a performer, speaking of one who does what is prescribed, such as one who keeps the law (Ro 2:13-note)

Those who belong to Jesus are marked in ear and foot, for not only do they hear God's voice in His Word of truth but they walk in His way. **Doers** thus emphasizes what they are rather than just what they do. One commentator describes a doer as "a person whose life is characterized by holy energy."

**Rick Renner** - The word "**doers**" is taken from the Greek word **poietes**, the same Greek word used for a poet. This word carries with it the idea of creativity, such as a poet whose personality includes a creative flair. James is telling us that if we can't easily think of a way to do what has been preached to us, we must get creative! We must find ways to do the Word....Whether the word **poietes** is used to depict a poet, as mentioned above or (in another form - *poiema*) to describe God's creative power, as in Ephesians 2:10, it always depicts someone putting forth his fullest creative abilities to achieve something. Now James uses this word **poietes** in James 1:22 to tell us that we must put forth our fullest efforts and most creative abilities in doing what we have heard preached! We cannot passively hope that the Word becomes a part of our lives; we have to get creative and find ways to make the Word a practical part of our lives.

As **Martin Luther** once said "The world does not need a definition of religion as much as it needs a demonstration."

It's easier to **SAY** what we believe than **BE** what we believe.

-- Robert Anthony

**Steven Cole** makes the point that "Obedience should always be the bottom line of Bible study or biblical preaching. Correct application (see **Application**) must always be built on correct interpretation (see **Interpretation**). But to study the word just to fill your head with knowledge, without applying the word, short-circuits God's purpose in giving it. Even seemingly irrelevant matters, such as biblical genealogies, are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2Ti 3:16-note). ([James 1:22-27 Doers of the Word](#))

There are seven NT uses of **poietes** (and none in the non-apocryphal Septuagint) most of the uses being by James...

**Acts 17:28** for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own **poets** have said, 'For we also are His offspring.' (**Comment:** Obviously here **poietes** has the special classical sense of "poets.")

**Romans 2:13** (note) for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the **doers** of the Law will be justified.

[James 1:22 \(note\)](#) But prove yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

[James 1:23 \(note\)](#) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not **adoer**, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

**James 1:25** (note) But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

**James 4:11** Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a **doer** of the law, but a judge of it.

**Paul R VanGorder** observed that...

Many Christians have allowed their knowledge of the truth to outdistance their practice. They remind me of a story in Glad Tidings by James Kallam. He tells of a young book salesman who was assigned to a rural area. Seeing a farmer seated in a rocking chair on his front porch, the young man approached him with all the zeal of a newly trained salesman. "Sir," he said, "I have here a book that will tell you how to farm 10 times better than you are doing it now." The farmer continued to rock. After a few seconds he stopped, looked at the young fellow and said, "Son, I don't need your book. I already know how to farm 10 times better than I'm doing it now."

**Pastor Steven Cole** has an amusing story related doers of the word...

Pastor Stuart Briscoe was teaching the principles of Bible study. He showed how to pick out the promises and the commands in Scripture, and what to do with them. Finally, he reviewed and asked, "Now, what do you do with the commands?" A little old lady raised her hand and said, "I underline them in blue."

Underlining the Bible's commands in blue might make for a colorful Bible, but the point of the commands is that we obey them. Unfortunately, there are many people in evangelical churches who have their heads filled with information from the Bible, but they don't obey what the Bible commands. That may sound harsh, but surveys commonly show that there is substantially no difference between evangelical Christians and the

population at large on most moral and social beliefs and behavior.

For example, pollster George Barna (in World [12/6/03], p. 33) found that one out of three “born-again Christians” (defined as “those who report having made a personal commitment to Christ and expect to get to heaven because they accepted Jesus”) accept same-sex unions. Thirty-nine percent believe it is morally acceptable for couples to live together before marriage. And, born-again Christians are more likely than non-Christians to have experienced divorce (27 to 24 %)! James would be aghast! Although the readers to whom he wrote differ from the modern church, his message is just as relevant now as it was when he wrote it. He’s saying, To hear the word and not do it leads to deception, but to hear the word and do it leads to blessing. ([James 1:22-27 Doers of the Word](#))

**Word** (3056) (**logos** from **légō** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as “something that is said, a statement, an utterance”, the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. In the Greek mind and as used by secular and philosophical Greek writers, **lógos** did not mean merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object’s name. Let me illustrate this somewhat subtle nuance in the meaning of **lógos** with an example from the Septuagint (LXX) (Greek of the Hebrew OT) in which **lógos** is used in the well known phrase **the Ten Commandments**.

**Lógos** then is a general term for speaking, but always used for speaking with rational content. **Lógos** is a word uttered by the human voice which embodies an underlying concept or idea. When one has spoken the sum total of their thoughts concerning something, they have given to their hearer a total concept of that thing. Thus the word **lógos** conveys the idea of “a total concept” of anything. **Lógos** means the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known. It can also refer to the inward thought or reason itself. Note then that **lógos** does not refer merely to a part of speech but to a concept or idea. In other words, in classical Greek, **lógos** never meant just a **word** in the grammatical sense as the mere name of a thing, but rather the thing referred to, the material, not the formal part. In fact, the Greek language has 3 other words (rhema, onoma, epos) which designate a **word** in its grammatical sense. **Lógos** refers to the total expression whereas **rhema** (see word study) for example is used of a part of speech in a sentence. In other words **rhema**, emphasizes the parts rather than the whole.

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The story is told of King Edward VI of England who attended worship service and stood while the Word of God was read taking notes which he later studied with great care. Throughout the week King Edward earnestly tried to apply them to his life. That’s the kind of serious-minded response to truth the James means when he says “Be doers of the Word...”. A single revealed fact cherished in the heart and acted upon is more vital to our growth than a head filled with lofty ideas about God.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Recall the parishioner who met the preacher at the door after the service and said, “Pastor, that was a wonderful sermon.” To which the pastor replied, “Well, that remains to be seen, doesn’t it?” This should be our approach, not just to learn it but to live it! How are you doing dear follower of Jesus?

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Adrian Rogers - One of the finest psychological truths that I’ve ever learned in my life is this—are you ready for it? Impression without expression leads to depression. Now, what does that mean? If you come and listen to me preach, and you get these things in your notebook—you get these things in your head—but you do not practice them in your life, it’s not going to make you a better person—it’s going to make you a worse person. You’re going to have more and more guilt, and more and more despair, because you’re hearing these things, and you’re not doing them. Jesus, in the Bible, says, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17)

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**What Will I Do?** - A man who has been my mentor and friend for many years often says that his goal in studying the Bible is always personal application. I appreciate his emphasis on putting learning into practice, because it’s too easy for those of us who study, discuss, teach, and write about the Bible to take a merely intellectual approach to the Word.

Oswald Chambers said: “There is a danger with the children of God of getting too familiar with sublime things. We talk so much about these wonderful realities, and forget that we have to exhibit them in our lives. It is perilously possible to mistake the exposition of the truth for the truth; to run away with the idea that because we are able to expound these things, we are living them too.”

James reminds us that the person “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” (1:25). The key issue is not what is preached or written, but what is done.

When I study God’s Word, my first question should not be, “What am I going to say about this?” but “What am I going to do about this?” By David C. McCasland

We take delight to teach God's Word,  
We say, "Amen, it's true!"  
But it's of little use to us  
Unless His will we do. —D. De Haan

**One step forward in obedience is worth years of study about it. —Chambers**

Vance Havner writes...

**'Take Heed How Ye Hear** It is important that we hear. It is important what we hear. It is important how we hear what we hear.

**1. Consider the privilege of hearing the Word of God** We take it for granted in America. Few people would want to live where there are no churches but millions live as though there were no churches. Multitudes the world around cannot hear the truth of God for various reasons. As lightly as we regard it now, this privilege cost aplenty in days gone by. And how grateful we ought to be that God has spoken both in His Book and in His Son! What if He had remained silent and there were no word from heaven!

**2. Along with privilege goes responsibility.** Where much is given, much shall be required. Today sees a famine of the hearing of God's Word, not because we cannot hear it, but because we do not listen to it. Moreover, as the text declares, there is the duty of doing it when we hear it. Throughout the Bible runs the note, "My commandments to do them"; "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

**3. Often overlooked in our text and almost never quoted is the penalty for not doing the Word we hear, "Deceiving your own selves."** Away with the notion that it does not matter much how we hear! The man who hears and refuses to obey walks out of church having betrayed himself into deception. One cannot hear the truth and remain the same. (Vance Havner)

**D L Moody's** example of **doing**...

While D. L. Moody was attending a convention in Indianapolis on mass evangelism, he asked his song leader Ira Sankey to meet him at 6 o'clock one evening at a certain street corner. When Sankey arrived, Mr. Moody asked him to stand on a box and sing. Once a crowd had gathered, Moody spoke briefly and then invited the people to follow him to the nearby convention hall. Soon the auditorium was filled with spiritually hungry people, and the great evangelist preached the gospel to them. Then the convention delegates began to arrive. Moody stopped preaching and said, "Now we must close, as the brethren of the convention wish to come and discuss the topic, 'How to reach the masses.'" And thus the "uneducated" Moody graphically illustrated the difference between talking about doing something and going out and doing it.

Superficial hearing without sincere doing is like the breezes that ripple the surface of the ocean, but do not affect the tides or the gulf stream.

**AND NOT MERELY HEARERS WHO DELUDE THEMSELVES: kai me monon akroatai paralogizomenoi (PMPMPN) heautous:**

- Jas 1:26; Is 44:20; Obadiah 1:3; 1Co 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; Gal 6:3,7; 2Ti 3:13; Titus 3:3; 2Pe 2:13; 1Jn 1:8; Rev 12:9
- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **"DEAF" DELUDED HEARERS**

**Not** ([3361](#)) (**me**) is the relative negative

**Augustine** - The hearer of God's Word ought to be like those animals that chew the cud; he ought not only to feed upon it, but to ruminate upon it.

**Hearers** ([202](#)) (**akroates** from **akroamai** = to listen or hear) first describes one who hears referring primarily to the perception of sounds by the sense of hearing. The use of this term by James again implies that in ancient times their was frequent public reading of the Scriptures along with oral instruction.

Recalling that James is addressing his Jewish brethren, **Rogers'** note is interesting - In the Jewish home, the education process, and



in the synagogue worship, the hearing of the Law read aloud played an important part in Jewish life. The rabbis also stressed very strongly the necessity of keeping the Law (Ed note: But of course they were forced to rely on faulty human power, whereas believers are to rely solely on the Spirit power.) ([Rogers, C L - originally by Fritz Rienecker: New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament. Zondervan. 1998](#))

**Akroates** is used 3 times by James here in chapter 1 (see notes [James 1:22](#); [1:23](#) ; 1:25)

**Romans 2:13** (note) for not (**ou** = absolute negation = no exceptions!) the **hearers** (akroates) of the Law are just (dikaioi = rightly related to God) before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified (declared righteous).

**Vincent** comments on **akroates** in **Romans 2:13**: Like the Jews, who heard it (the Law) regularly in the synagogues... It brings out... the characteristic feature; those whose business is hearing. (The "business" of the Jews was to listen to the Word of God.)

**Hiebert** - Among the Greeks, **akroates** was a common term for persons who were attendants at a lecture but not disciples of the lecturer. They were hearers who in life did not follow the instructions given. It is a common human failing from which Christians are not exempt. If all who are auditors of the Word on Sunday would put it into practice during the week, what a difference that would make! Roberts tartly remarks, "Our churches are filled with spiritual sponges who soak up the information, sit, sour, and eventually stink!" ([Ibid](#))

**MacArthur** writes that **akroates** was "a term used to describe students who audited a class. An auditor usually listens to the lectures, but is permitted to treat assignments and exams as optional. Many people in the church today approach spiritual truth with an auditor's mentality, receiving God's Word only passively. But James' point, shown by his illustrations in James 1:23, 24, 25, 26, 27 (see notes [Js 1:23](#); [24](#); [25](#); [26](#); [27](#)) is that merely hearing God's Word results in worthless religion (see note James 1:26). In other words, mere hearing is no better than unbelief or outright rejection. In fact, it's worse! The hearer-only is enlightened but unregenerate. James is reiterating truth he undoubtedly heard firsthand from the Lord Himself. Jesus warned powerfully against the error of hearing without doing (Mt 7:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 -see notes Mt 7:21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27), as did the apostle Paul (Ro 2:5-note). (SEE [The Gospel According to the Apostles: The Roll of Works in a ...](#))

One source notes that "In Classical Greek, the alternate **akroázomai**, to hear and the derivative **akróama** meant something heard, especially with pleasure, such as a piece read, recited, played, or sung. In the NT, it has the meaning of one just listening without practicing what one hears. (Zodhiates, S.BORROW [The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament](#))

**Merely** (only) ([3440](#)) (**monos**) means without accompaniment. Hearing is the only reaction. Hearing is unaccompanied by doing.

Scriptures related to this topic...

One that only hears and does nothing – Acts 26:22,23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29

An example of hearers and one doer – Mt 13:1-23

An example of two doers and one hearer – Mt 25:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

**John Blanchard** - The man who is not prepared to **heed** the Word of God obediently will not even be able to **hear** it correctly. This is why the parables become **windows** to some people and **walls** to others. (The Complete Gathered Gold- highly recommended resource for quotes) (Bolding added)

**Delude** ([3884](#)) (**paralogizomai** from **para** = beside, alongside + **logizomai** = to reason, to count) is literally to reason beside the point, to reason alongside (think about it as reasoning with words "alongside, beside or against" the Truth), to beguile by mere probability that something is true and so to mislead. To misjudge. To miscalculate. To cheat in reckoning. It pictures skewed logic and thus primarily means to reckon wrong, to reason falsely, and so to deceive by false reasoning.

Note the **present tense** indicates that they are continually reasoning themselves into a false premise and thus deceiving themselves, this state of spiritual deception, a dangerous place in which to be. The present tense further describes a process of self-deception by means of fallacious reasoning. This fearful state brings to mind Paul's charge in his second epistle to the Corinthians...

**Test** (peirazo- present imperative = calls for this be our habitual practice) yourselves (not others but yourself!) to see if you are **in the faith**; **examine** (dokimazo - present imperative = calls for this be our habitual practice) yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail

the test (adokimos - word study)?

**Comment:** So what is the "test"? How do you "examine" yourself? He is not saying to "look within yourself" per se, but to look at the One Who is **in** you and look at the evidence that He is **in** you. What does that mean practically? Believer's Study Bible ([Ref](#)) explains that "this verse is not intended to rob believers of the assurance and security of their salvation. It is, however, intended as a warning to those who would follow false teaching and adopt a life-style that is inconsistent with the message of reconciliation (cf. 2Co 12:20, 21). To persist in either activity is a cause for serious introspection and a testing to see whether or not one is truly "in the faith."

**THOUGHT** -Beloved, the Word of God is not meant to make us smarter sinners but to make us more like the Savior. And so it follows that it is not how much one is "**in**" the Word but really how much of the Word is "**in**" us, renewing and transforming our mind (cp Ro 12:2+; Col 3:10+; Ep 4:23+), as demonstrated by our changed behavior (not just hearing but doing) (cp 2Co 5:17+).

Notice that James mentions the idea of **self deception** (using a different verb) again in verse 26...

If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue (not a "doer") but **deceives** his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. (See note)

**Cole** makes a good point emphasizing that "There is an inherent danger in attending a church where God's word is proclaimed week to week: If you hear the word often, but do not put it into practice, you delude yourself. The solution is not to avoid hearing the word, but rather to apply it to the problems in your life that the word uncovers. ([James 1:22-27 Doers of the Word](#))

**Hiebert** explains that those who believed "that attentive hearing of the Word was the fulfillment of all that was required, had been led astray from the path of truth. In resting satisfied with possessing the means of grace without applying it, they were the victims of their own deception. "It is sad to be deceived, most miserable to be self-deceived. Many still determine their godliness by the quality of hearing (for instance sermons) or reading (even God's word) instead of action and obedience." Jesus warns explicitly against this error (Mt 7:21-27; cf. Ro 2:17-25). ([Ibid](#))

**Paul** used **paralogizomai** in his warning to the saints at Colossae emphasizing that **in Christ**...

are hidden all (how many?) the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Why is this truth so vitally important?) I say this in order that no one **may delude (paralogizomai)** you with persuasive argument (plausible, but false, speech ="believable" speech resulting from the use of well-constructed, probable arguments). (Col 2:3-note, Col 2:4-note)

**Vincent** notes that **paralogizomai** is "from **para**, beside, contrary to, and **logizomai**, to reckon, and hence to conclude by reasoning. The deception referred to is, therefore, that into which one betrays himself by false reasoning — reasoning beside the truth.

**THOUGHT** - How important is this truth in modern America where up to 50% of individuals surveyed profess to have had a "born again" experience? Beloved, it is a life or death matter (eternally speaking) and so it is crucial to understand what James is clearly stating.

**Douglas Moo** writes that "The idea of "**deceive**" in these contexts is clear: to be "**deceived**" is to be blinded to the reality of one's true religious state. People can think that they are right with God when they really are not. And so it is for those people who "hear" the word—regular church attenders, seminary students (!), and even seminary professors (!! — but do not "do" it. They are mistaken in thinking that they are truly right with God. For God's word cannot be divided into parts. If one wants the benefits of its saving power, one must also embrace it as a guide for life. The person who fails to do the word, James therefore suggests (in an anticipation of his argument in Jas 2:14-26-see notes), is a person who has not truly accepted God's word at all. (SEE [The Letter of James](#))

**John MacArthur** adds that **paralogizomai** was a term used in mathematics meaning a miscalculation and concludes that...

"spiritual miscalculation", which causes them to **delude** themselves. Such a man does not delude anyone but himself! They are self-deceived. An old Scottish expression speaks of such deluded professors as "sermon tasters who never tasted the grace of God." Any response to the gospel that does not include obedience is self-deception. (**Ed note:** See related discussion - **relationship of faith and obedience**) If a profession of faith in Christ does not result in a changed life that hungers and thirsts for God's Word and desires to obey that Word, the profession is only that - a mere profession. Satan, of course, loves such professions, because they give church members the damning notion that they are saved when they are not! They still belong to him, not God. (SEE [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Comment:** MacArthur's explanation helps us understand Jesus' stern and even frightening warning that "*not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does* (present tense = continually, not perfectly for no man can do that in this life, but "keeping" as the general direction of one's life) *the will of My Father who is in heaven.*" (Mt 7:21, 22, 23 -see notes - Mt 7:21; 22; 23)

Jesus says that one reason why so few enter the narrow gate of salvation (cp Mt 7:13, 14-note) is because of self-deception. As J. C. Ryle said

The Lord Jesus winds up the Sermon on the Mount by a passage of heart-piercing application. He turns from false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers

Not only can false prophets deceive us about the way of salvation, but we can deceive ourselves. After warning us about false prophets, the Lord now warns men about themselves. Sinful man is biased in his own favor and, because of pride, tends to reject the true gospel. The two categories of self-deception are those of mere verbal profession and of mere intellectual knowledge. The first, described in Mt 7:21, 22, 23, involves those who say but do not do, and the second, described in Mt 7:24, 25, 26, 27, involves those who hear but do not do. (For more discussion on the dangers of self-deception see MacArthur's message entitled [Empty Words and Empty Hearts, Mt 7:21-23](#))

**Augustine** made a similar statement regarding self deception declaring that...

If you believe what you like in the Bible, and reject what you like, it is not the Bible you believe but yourself.

**Robert Johnstone** - Knowing that the study of divine truth, through reading the Bible, giving attendance on the public ordinances of grace, and otherwise, is a most important duty, is, indeed, the road leading toward the gate of everlasting life, they allow themselves, through man's natural aversion to all genuine spirituality, to be persuaded by the wicked one that this is the sum of all Christian duty, and itself the gate of life, so that in mere "hearing" they enter in, and all is well with them. To rest satisfied with the means of grace, without yielding up our hearts to their power as means, so as to receive the grace and exhibit its working in our lives, is manifestly folly of the same class as that of a workman who should content himself with possessing tools, without using them, madness of the same class as that of a man perishing with hunger, who should exult in having bread in his hands, without eating it, but folly and madness as immeasurably greater than these, as the "work of God" (John 6:29) transcends in importance the work of an earthly artisan, and "life with Christ in God" (Col 3:3-note) the perishable existence of earth. ([Robert Johnstone, Lectures Exegetical and Practical on the Epistle of James. reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978](#))

**Andrew Murray** - What a terrible delusion to be content with, to delight in **hearing the word**, and yet **not do it**. And how prevalent the sight of multitudes... listening to the Word of God most regularly and earnestly, and yet not doing it! If a servant were to hear but not do, how quickly the judgment would be given... Why are we deluded in this way? For one thing people mistake the pleasure they have in hearing the Word of God for Christianity and worship. The mind delights in having the truth presented clearly; the imagination is gratified by its illustration; the feelings are stirred by its application. To an active mind knowledge gives pleasure. A person may study some branch of science—say electricity—for the enjoyment the knowledge gives him, without the least intention of applying it practically. So people go to church, and enjoy the preaching, and yet do not do what God asks.

**John Calvin** reminds us that...

We must observe that the knowledge of God which we are invited to cultivate is not that which, resting satisfied with empty speculation (cp Col 2:8-note), only flutters in the brain, but a knowledge which will prove substantial and fruitful whenever it is duly perceived and rooted in the heart (cp Lk 8:15).

**Spurgeon** - What did they **deceive (delude)** themselves about? Why, probably, they thought they were considerably better for being hearers: much to be commended and sure to get a blessing. They would not have been happy if they had not heard the word on Sunday, and they look with disgust upon their neighbors who make nothing of the Sabbath. They themselves are very superior people because they are regular church-goers or chapel-goers. They have a sitting, and a hymn-book, and a Bible: is not that a good deal? If they stayed away from a place of worship for a month they would be very uneasy; but though they do not believe that going to a place of worship will save them, yet it quiets their conscience, and they feel themselves more at ease. I should like to feed you for a month on your theory. I would rattle the plates in your ears, and see whether you would be fed. I would not accommodate you with a bed at night. Why should I? I would preach you a discourse upon the benefit of sleep. Nor need I even give you a room to occupy: I would read you an eloquent dissertation upon domestic architecture, and show you what a house should be. You would very soon quit my door, and call me inhospitable, if I gave you music instead of meat; and yet you deceive yourselves with the notion that merely hearing about Jesus and his great salvation has made you better men. Or, perhaps, the deceit; runs in another line: you foster the idea that the stern truths which you hear do not apply to you. Sinners? Yes, certainly, the preacher addresses sinners, and

may they get good out of it; but you are not a sinner, at least not in any special sense, so as to need looking after. Repentance? Most people ought to repent, but you do not see any reason why you should repent. Looking to Christ for salvation? "Excellent doctrine," you say, "Excellent doctrine!" But, somehow, you do not look to Him for salvation. Here is the scriptural verdict upon this opinion of yours - **"Deceiving your own selves."** The gospel does not deceive you; it tells you "Ye must be born again, ye must believe in Jesus Christ, or be lost." The preacher does not; deceive you; he never said half a word to support the notion that coming to this place would be of any service to you unless you would yield your hearts to Christ. No, he has learnt to speak plain English about such matters. You deceive your own selves if, being hearers and not doers, you derive comfort from that which you hear. ([James 1:22-25 Two Sorts of Hearers](#))

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**Hearing with Doing - A "Titanic" Mistake** - This anecdotal story concerning the great praised ship Titanic reminds of the vanity (and tragedy) of hearing without doing. It was 1912 and the mighty seemingly invincible Titanic was on her maiden voyage. The ships radio man received a message from another ship that there were icebergs in area. Unfortunately the radio operator placed the message under a weight next to his elbow and went on with his work. And thus the word of imminent danger never reached the captain, and this small miscue led to the loss of 1500 lives when the Titanic struck an iceberg and suffered a mortal bowl. Information without action can result in destruction.

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**Richard De Haan** - a man in New York City who died at the age of 63 without ever having had a job. He spent his entire adult life in college. During those years he acquired so many academic degrees that they "looked like the alphabet" behind his name. Why did this man spend his entire life in college? When he was a child, a wealthy relative died who had named him as a beneficiary in his will. It stated that he was to be given enough money to support him every year as long as he stayed in school. And it was to be discontinued when he had completed his education. The man met the terms of the will, but by remaining in school indefinitely he turned a technicality into a steady income for life—something his benefactor never intended. Unfortunately, he spent thousands of hours listening to professors and reading books but never "doing." He acquired more and more knowledge but didn't put it into practice. This reminds me of what James said: **"Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only"** (Jas 1:22). If we read the Bible or listen as it is taught but fail to put to work what we have learned, we are as bad as that man with his string of degrees. His education was of no practical benefit to anyone. Hearing must be matched by doing. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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An unknown author captured eloquently the way in which we so practice religion but fall short of truly being "doers of the Word"...

I was hungry and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.

I was imprisoned and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release.

I was naked and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God. I was lonely and you left me alone to pray for me. You seem so holy, so close to God.

But I'm still very hungry and lonely and cold.

We must hear again the words of James: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

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**P. R. Van Gorder** wrote that...

Many Christians have allowed their knowledge of the truth to outdistance their practice. They remind me of a story in Glad Tidings by James Kallam. He tells of a young book salesman who was assigned to a rural area. Seeing a former seated in a rocking chair on his front porch, the young man approached him with all the zeal of a newly trained salesman. "Sir," he said, "I have here a book that will tell you how to farm 10 times better than you are doing it now." The farmer continued to rock. After a few seconds he stopped, looked at the young fellow and said, "Son, I don't need your book. I already know how to farm 10 times better than I'm doing it now." (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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**Use It Or Lose** (Read: Luke 12:41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48) It I once came across an article that was titled "National Geographic, The Doomsday Machine." It humorously stated that National Geographic magazine will soon doom the American continent to a watery grave because no one ever throws it away. Issue after issue piles up in attics and basements all over America. In time, the accumulation of heavy paper will trigger earthquakes in California, sink coal-mining towns, and precipitate mud slides. Especially

hard hit will be large cities where subscribers cluster.

This lighthearted idea has a serious spiritual counterpart in people who accumulate God's Word in their minds. The tendency is to store up and file scriptural truth in our heads, but that isn't enough. James reminded us that we must be doers of the Word, not just hearers (Jas 1:22). Jesus spoke of the need to put His words into practice (Lk 12:41-48). Understanding the Scriptures makes us responsible to put its truths into action. It's all too easy to have a "save it" rather than a "use it" attitude.

The Lord hasn't made His Word available just to give us interesting reading. He's preparing us for action. If we ignore this truth, we'll find out on judgment day that taking God's Word lightly carries weighty consequences. — Mart De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

No truth of God stored in the mind  
Will ever meet our needs  
Until that truth gives birth to faith  
And faith gives birth to deeds. --DJD

### **It's a heavy responsibility to own a Bible.**

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**More Than Know-How** - On one occasion while Sir Henry Brackenbury (1837-1914) was a military attaché in Paris, he was talking with the distinguished French statesman Leon Gambetta. "In these days," said Gambetta, "there are only two things a soldier needs to know. He must know how to march, and he must know how to shoot!"

The Englishman quickly responded, "I beg your pardon, Excellency, but you have forgotten the most important thing of all!"

"What's that?" asked Gambetta.

Brackenbury replied, "He must know how to obey!"

This truth also applies to followers of Jesus Christ. It's not enough for us to know the facts about Christianity so that we can look like a soldier of Christ. What's most important is that we accept the Word of God by faith and then obey it (Jas. 1:22).

We should never be satisfied with only an intellectual awareness of how to live. We should not study the Scriptures merely to acquaint ourselves with knowledge about God. It takes more than know-how to please our Lord and Master--He expects obedience.

Put your knowledge into action. Submit to the supreme authority--Christ the Lord. — Richard De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

It is God's will that we should read  
His Word from day to day,  
Not just for knowledge, but much more--  
To love Him and obey. --Hess

**One step forward in obedience  
is worth years of study about it.**

**--Chambers**

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**Voice-Activated** - Some technology experts believe that computer keyboards will become obsolete in the next few years as more and more functions become voice-activated. Instead of typing a letter to a friend, we will speak the words to a computer that will print them on paper or send them as e-mail. Voice-activation will so permeate daily life that instead of pressing buttons and twisting dials, we will give verbal instructions to everything from the television to the toaster. When we speak, it will be done.

Voice-activated devices are programmed to do what they are told. God could have made us that way, but instead He gave us the choice of whether or not we'll listen and obey.

James urged us to obey God every time He speaks to us through His Word. He wrote, "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). Self-deception comes when we listen to God's Word without doing what it says. We quickly forget what the Lord shows us about ourselves and wander along our way unchanged.

It is natural to want God to hear and answer us, but the greater issue is whether we listen and respond to Him. Does God have our attention today? Are we choosing to be voice-activated by every word from Him? — David C. McCasland (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

God who formed worlds by the power of His word  
Speaks through the Scriptures His truth to be heard;  
And if we read with the will to obey,  
He by His Spirit will show us His way. —D. De Haan

**When you open your Bible, ask the Author to open your heart.**

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### **Mom's Translation**

Read: Ezra 9:5-15

Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. —Ezra 7:10

Four pastors were discussing the merits of the various translations of the Bible. One liked a particular version best because of its simple, beautiful English. Another preferred a more scholarly edition because it was closer to the original Hebrew and Greek. Still another liked a contemporary version because of its up-to-date vocabulary.

The fourth minister was silent for a moment, then said, "I like my mother's translation best." Surprised, the other three men said they didn't know his mother had translated the Bible. "Yes," he replied. "She translated it into life, and it was the most convincing translation I ever saw."

Instead of discussing translation preferences, this pastor reminded them that the most important focus should be learning God's Word and doing it. That was the top priority of Ezra's life. As a scribe, he studied the Law, obeyed it, and taught it to the Israelites (Ezra 7:10). For example, God commanded His people not to intermarry with neighboring nations who served pagan gods (Ezra 9:1-2). Ezra confessed the nation's sin to God (9:10-12) and corrected the people, who then repented (Ezra 10:10-12).

Let's follow Ezra's example by seeking the Word of God and translating it into life. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

When we take time to read God's Word,  
Our heart is filled with pleasure;  
So let's relate the truth we've heard-  
With others share the treasure.  
-Hess

**The best commentary on the Bible  
is a person who puts it into practice.**

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**Learn And Live** - A church had a new pastor who preached the same sermon every Sunday. When people started complaining, he told the congregation, "I'll preach a new sermon when you act on this one."

That pastor's statement reminds me of the words of the apostle James: "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (Jas 1:22). As followers of Christ, we are to live what we learn.

Michael Baughen, a speaker at a Bible conference in England, stated, "James wants you to have a holy faith--worked out in the world." Baughen pointed out that some people, though involved in the church and regular in giving, never care for anybody. "The world calls that hypocrisy," he said. Indeed, our empty lip service never fools the world. James said we fool only ourselves. Our faith is "pure and undefiled" when it overflows in service to others (Jas 1:27).

Baughen lamented, "Too many times at a funeral I hear, 'He never did any harm,' and I want to scream, 'Did he ever do any good?'"

Some Christians are little more than "harmless" citizens in the world, for they are hearers only. Others are compelling witnesses, for they are both hearers and doers.

Let's not just learn what God says. Let's live it! — Joanie Yoder (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

A faith that is vibrant, impassioned, alive,  
Will certainly work itself out;  
A faith that is eager to roll up its sleeves  
Will find that there's no room for doubt. --Gustafson

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## You haven't really learned the Word until you live the Word.

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**Let's Not Kid Ourselves** - A child was told by his mother, "Go look in the mirror and wash your face." He insisted, "I already have!" But she replied, "You're only kidding yourself!" His dirty face proved to her that if he really had looked in the mirror, he ignored what it revealed. He may have seen the truth about himself, but he didn't act on it.

The apostle James taught that anyone who hears God's Word but does not obey it is kidding himself. He is like someone who looks at himself in a mirror but goes his way unchanged (James 1:22, 22, 23, 24). He hears and reads God's Word, but then dismisses it, not letting the Scriptures change him. The person who looks into the mirror of God's Word, however, longing to be transformed by it, "is not a forgetful hearer" (Jas 1:25). He wants the Word to reveal his true needs and show him truths to obey. As he obeys, he progressively becomes more like Jesus. James said that kind of person "will be blessed in what he does" (Jas 1:25).

If we honestly want to become more like Christ in our attitudes, actions, and reactions, we must look into God's mirror, the Bible, regularly. But let's not kid ourselves—just looking isn't enough. God's Word will transform us, but only if we obey it. — Joanie Yoder (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, help me heed Your every word,  
Commands that I have read or heard;  
As You reveal Your will each day,  
Help me to follow and obey. —Fitzhugh

**Open your Bible prayerfully,  
read it carefully, and obey it joyfully.**

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**Stay Home And Keep Them** - A church member told his pastor that he was going to the Holy Land. He said that it was his intention to visit Mount Sinai. "In fact," he told the minister, "I plan to climb to the top of that mountain, and read the Ten Commandments aloud when I get there."

Thinking this would please the pastor, he was surprised to hear, "You know, I can think of something even better than that." The man responded, "You can, Pastor? And what might that be?"

He replied rather bluntly, "Instead of traveling thousands of miles to read the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, why not stay right here at home and keep them?"

God wants us to read His Word, of course. But more important, He wants us to obey it. So, as we open the Bible each day, we should pray not only for illumination to understand it but also for a willingness to obey it. Hearing and doing must go hand-in-hand (James 1:22).

When Saul heard Jesus speaking to him on the road to Damascus, he asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). That's a good question for us to ask whenever we read the Bible or hear it read. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Let's be "doers of the Word."— Richard De Haan

We take delight to read God's Word,  
We say, "Ah, yes, it's true!"  
But we must go beyond mere words  
And seek His will to do. —D. De Haan

**The Spirit of God enables us to obey the Word of God.**

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**What Matters Most** - When I was a young man, I spent time pondering deep theological problems, like the source of evil in a world created by a perfectly holy God. I expected that by the time I reached a ripe old age I would know all the answers. Even though I'm much older, I feel as if I know less now than I thought I did then.

Long ago I came to the realization that as a finite human being I do not have the mental capacity to grasp fully what is infinite and eternal. I also have learned that what matters most is not gaining more knowledge about life's mysteries but putting into practice what God has clearly told me. As I do that, I will become the kind of person He wants me to be.

James 1:12-27, for example, tells us how to respond when tempted. We are to see the benefits of resisting temptation (Jas 1:12), take responsibility for our actions (Jas 1:13, 14, 15), acknowledge God's goodness (Jas 1:13,17), see ourselves as the recipients of His grace (Jas 1:17), exercise patience (Jas 1:19), listen submissively to Him (Jas 1:21), and put off all moral filth and evil (Jas 1:21). These words are not hard to understand. Our problem is that being "doers of the Word" (Jas 1:22) is not our highest priority. How different we would be if we did what we know matters most! — Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

It is God's will that we should read  
His Word from day to day,  
Not just for knowledge, but much more —  
To love Him and obey. —Hess

**We don't really know the Bible unless we obey the Bible.**

**James 1:23 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](#); ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

**Greek:** [hoti ei tis akroates logou estin \(3SPA1\) kai ou poietes, houtos eoiken \(3SRA1\) andri katanounti \(PAPMSD\) to prosopon tes geneseos autou en esoptro:](#)

**Amplified:** For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it and being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his [own] natural face in a mirror; ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ASV:** For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror:

**Hiebert:** Anyone who listens to the word, but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror

**KJV:** For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

**NLT:** For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** The man who simply hears and does nothing about it is like a man catching the reflection of his own face in a mirror. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Young's Literal:** because, if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, this one hath been like to a man viewing his natural face in a mirror,

**FOR IF ANYONE IS A HEARER OF THE WORD AND NOT A DOER: hoti ei tis akroates logou estin (3SPA1) kai ou poietes**

- Jas 2:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; Je 44:16; Ezek 33:31,32; Mt 7:26,27; Lk 6:47, 48, 49, Lk 7:1-16
- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **DANGEROUS DELUSION OF NOT BEING A DOER**

For [\(3754\)\(hoti\)](#) is a conjunction that in this context has a causal meaning and could be translated "because" (**see term of explanation**). Remember when you see a "for" or "because" (term of explanation) determine what the writer is explaining and what is his explanation. James explains what a non-doing hearer of God's Word is like to press home this important point and uses the familiar illustration of a man or woman who **looks at their face in a mirror**, where the mirror is metaphorically speaking the Word of God. James gives a second illustration of the deception of a non-doing hearer in James 1:26 using the picture of a person with an **unbridled tongue**.

If [\(1487\)](#) introduces a conditional statement. **See notes** on conditional clauses which are usually identified in the English translation by beginning with the preposition "If". Here the if is a first class conditional statement which assumes the existence of an unnamed



individual whose hearing of the Word is not united with doing of the Word. James characterizes the individual as a **hearer** and not a **doer** and in so doing speaks not only of his conduct but also of his character as revealed by his conduct.

**Anyone** (5100) (**tis**) means someone in this case who is identified by the action of listening to the Word but failing to obey what he or she has heard. This individual is a personal illustration of the danger James warns about in the preceding verse.

**Hearer** (202) (**akroates** from **akroaomai** = to listen or hear) first describes one who hears referring primarily to the perception of sounds by the sense of hearing.

**Word** (3056) (**logos** from **légō** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. In the present context **word** is used to stand for Scripture in general.

**Not** (3756) (**ou**) absolutely not. All hearing but absolutely no doing of spiritual truth that is heard.

**Doer** (4163) (**poietes** from **poieo** = to do) describes a maker, producer, performer, in short, one who does what is prescribed in the Word (cp Ro 2:13 "doer of the Law")

**Hiebert** rightly remarks that this man's not doing is potentially his "undoing" as it...

marks his fatal failure to let the message find active operation in daily life. His inaction brings his faith into question. Jesus told His followers, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (Jn 14:15). "The Christian faith," Kistemaker notes, "is always active and stands in sharp contrast to other religions that practice mediation and general inactivity." ([Ibid](#))

**Spurgeon** observes that...

James has no speculations. "By their fruits ye shall know them," seems to have taken possession of his mind, and he is always demanding practical holiness. He is not satisfied with the buds of hearing, he wants the fruits of obedience. We need more of his practical spirit in this age, for there are certain ministers who are not content with sowing the old seed, the selfsame seed which, from the hand of apostles, confessors, fathers, reformers, and martyrs, produced a harvest unto God; but they spend their time in speculating as to whether the seed of tares grown under certain circumstances may not bring forth wheat; whether, at any rate, good wheat would not be the better for the admixture of just a little sprinkling of tare seed. We want somebody to take these various preachments, put them into a cauldron, boil them down, and see what is the essential practical product of them.

Some of you may have seen in the newspapers a short time ago an article which fastened itself upon my mind - an article with regard to the moral state of Germany. The writer, himself a German, says that the skepticism of the professed preachers of the word, the continual doubts which have been suggested by scientific men and more especially by professedly religious men as to revelation, have now produced upon the German nation the most frightful consequences. The picture which he gives makes us fear that our Germanic friends are treading upon a volcano which may explode beneath their feet. (Written before WWI & WWII) The authority of the government has been so severely exercised that men begin to be weary of it; and, meanwhile, the authority of God has been put so much out of the question that the basis of society is undermined. I need not, however, ground my remarks upon that article, for the French revolution at the end of the last century remains in history as an enduring warning as to the dread effects of philosophy when it has cast suspicion upon all religion and created a ration of infidels. I pray God that the like may not happen here; but the party of "modern thought" seem resolved upon repeating the experiment. So greatly is the just severity of God ignored, and so trifling an evil is sin made out to be, that if men were to be doers of what they hear, and to carry out what has been taught from certain professedly Christian pulpits, anarchy would be the result. Free-thinking always leads that way. God keep us from it.

While preachers too often toy with preaching, how much there is among hearers of the same fashion. Hearing is often merely a critical exercise, and the question after a sermon is not "How was that truth fitted to your case?" but "How did you like him?" as if that had anything to do with it. When you hear music, do you ask, "How did you like the trumpet?" No, it is the music - not the instrument, that your mind thinks about; yet will persons always consider the minister rather than his message. Many contrast one preacher with another, when they had better contrast themselves with the divine law. Thus hearing the gospel is degraded into a pastime, and judged to be little better than a theatrical entertainment. Such things must not be. Preachers must preach as for eternity, and look for fruit; and hearers must, carry out what they hear, or otherwise the sacred ordinance of preaching will cease to be the channel of blessing, and will rather be an insult to God and a mockery to the souls of men. I shall, not; at any very great length, but I hope with much earnest ,speak of two classes of hearers, the unblessed class, and the second, the class who according to the text, are blessed in their deed. ([James 1:22-25 Two Sorts of Hearers](#))

- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

He is like (1503) (eiko) means to resemble and the **perfect tense** pictures this as his permanent condition and vividly places this man before the gaze of the reader.

Man (435) (aner) is the word for an adult male but can be used generically for all persons or mankind in general (which is clearly the use in this context). He is attentively considering his natural face (the one with which he was born).

**A man who looks at his natural face in a mirror** - He perceives clearly who he is, flaws and all, but turns and walks away.

**Looks at** (2657) (katanoeo from kata = down [kata can be used to intensify the meaning] + noéo = to perceive or think) means literally to put the mind down on something and so to observe or consider carefully and attentively. It means to fix one's eyes or mind upon and to perceive clearly. To take note of. **Katanoéo** in the **present tense** means he looks carefully, cautiously and even observantly. The idea inherent in this verb is to think about something very carefully or consider closely which denotes the action of one's mind apprehending certain facts about a thing so as to give one the proper and decisive thought about the thing considered. The point is that this man does not just make a passing glance. Katanoéo indicates that this person took note of what he saw and even implies that his looking in the mirror revealed something that needed attention! This picture indeed is worth a thousand words!

**Vine** writes that **katanoéo** "denotes the action of the mind in apprehending certain facts about a thing." ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**TDNT** writes that **katanoéo** - is closely related to the simple noeo, whose literal meaning is intensified, "to direct one's whole mind to an object," also from a higher standpoint to immerse oneself in it and hence to apprehend it in its whole compass... It can also denote 2. critical observation of an object: "to consider reflectively," "to study," "to examine,"... 3. In literary Greek katanoéo... means especially apprehension of a subject by intellectual absorption in it: "to consider," "to ponder," "to come to know," "to grasp," "to understand"... The emphasis in NT usage lies in the visual sphere. As a verb of seeing... especially in Luke... denotes perception by the eyes (Mt 7:3 = Lk 6:41, here paradoxically impossible; Acts 27:39), attentive scrutiny of an object (James 1:23, 24), the observation or consideration of a fact or process, whether natural or miraculous (Lk. 12:24, 27; Ro 4:19; Acts 7:31 f.; Acts 11:6). (BORROW [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**As Spurgeon** observes...

He really does see himself; for he cannot help doing so. He is not such a careless hearer as to be utterly blind to the revelation of God: he beholds, he beholds himself he beholds the face of his birth. He is thoughtful during the discourse he spies out the application of the truth to himself, and marks his own spots and blemishes.

Oftentimes he sees himself so plainly that he grows astonished at what he sees. He cries, like the woman of Samaria, — "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." Barbarous people, when they first of all see looking-glasses, are quite taken aback. "How can these things be?" is their first question. Now, have not you, dear hearers, who are unconverted, been often staggered at the home-thrusts of the Word? You have seen yourselves so unmistakably that you have been unable to escape from the truth, but have been filled with wonder at it. But what is the use of this, if it goes no farther?

Such observers have been known to praise the excellence of the mirror, and speak well of its faithfulness. You may hear them say, "The man is a true servant of God, and preaches in all honesty and courage." So far so good. Alas! there are many preachers who will win no such praise. As I have seen glasses which have elongated my face or broadened it, so that it was by no means my true image, so have I known ministers whose description of human nature is flattering and false. But after all, if the face is not to be washed, to what purpose is it that the mirror faithfully shows the smuts and stains which are upon it? O my hearers, I desire to

be always faithful to you, but how will my faithfulness benefit you if you are not faithful to yourselves? Why should I show you your blots if you do not seek to the Lord Jesus to have them removed?

Many of our hearers go somewhat further, for they are driven to make solemn resolves after looking at themselves. Yes, they will break off their sins by righteousness; they will repent; they will believe on the Lord Jesus — and yet their firm resolves are blown away like smoke, and come to nothing. The sight of their natural face leads to a natural resolve but the strength of nature suffices not to carry the resolution into practice. O sirs, ye must be born again; and for lack of that new birth your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew; both of these vanish soon, and so do your fine feelings and resolvings. What a multitude of dead resolves fall in this house of prayer! The blossoms upon our fruit-trees give great promise of a heavy crop of fruit, but, alas! the most of them do not knit, but drop from the tree and powder the ground as with snow; SO the flowers of promise are upon our hearers, but they come not to real soul-fruit. O Spirit of God, make it otherwise with my congregation! Save them from their own inconstancy! Let them not resolve and re-resolve, and yet die in their sins! [\(Ref\)](#)

**His natural face** - Literally this reads "the face of his genesis".

**Natural** [\(1078\)](#) (**genesis** from the verb **ginomai** = to come into existence) speaks of origin, lineage or birth. In this context the idea is the face of our birth or origin, as the way it has turned out to be or the way it really looks.

**Face** [\(4383\)](#) (**prosopon** from **pros** = before, towards + **ops** = eye, face) literally depicts one's face before or towards and means one's countenance.

**Mirror** [\(2072\)](#) (**esoptron** from **eisópsomai** = to look into) is that which ones looks into and thus a "looking glass" but actually a piece of flat metal, often bronze, sometimes silver (*P.Oxy.* 1449, 19) or even gold, with a handle of metal, ivory, or enamel, the metal being polished to reflect an image. Corinth was famous for manufacturing these "two part" instruments. Glass mirrors were not available until late Roman times. Pliny mentions precious stone mirrors made of agate and emerald. Obviously the reflected image was not perfect compared to modern glass mirrors. Figuratively esoptron depicts the imperfect image believers have on earth of things in heaven, which can only be "seen" indirectly by faith as we look into God's word (1 Cor 13:12, cf 2 Cor 4:18). Only other use in James 1:23+ "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."

**Vincent**, "The mirrors in NT times were usually so small as to be carried in the hand, though there are allusions to larger ones which reflected the entire person. The figure of the mirror, illustrating the partial vision of divine things, is frequent in the rabbinical writings, applied, for instance, to Moses and the prophets. Plato says: 'There is light in the earthly copies of justice or temperance or any of the higher qualities which are precious to souls: they are seen through a glass, dimly' (*Phaedrus*, 250). Compare *Republic*, vii, 516" (*WS*, 796).

James' main point in his illustration of the man and the mirror is that this man quickly forgets what he saw in the mirror. The mirror is not at fault. It does not give a false impression but shows the man what he really looks like. Figuratively, it speaks of showing what his heart, his inner person, his character looks like, something a literal mirror cannot visualize. (cp Heb 4:12-note, He 4:13-note)

**John Bunyan** wrote of a magnificent mirror that the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains showed to Christiana and Mercy

Now the glass was one of a thousand. It would present a man, one way with his own features exactly; and turn it but another way, and it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of pilgrims Himself. Yea, I have talked with those that can tell, and have said they have seen the very crown of thorns upon His head by looking into this glass; they have therein also seen the holes in His hands, in His feet, and His side. The man who continues looking into the mirror of God's Word sees in it things far more wonderful than his own face. He sees not only his filthy garments, not only the spots and stains on his life; he sees in it Christ, the Christ of the thorn-crowned brow, the Christ of the Cross, his Saviour, whose blood cleanses him from all sin. [Page:The pilgrim's progress by John Bunyan](#)

**MacArthur** - Bunyan's point is that, when a person honestly and humbly looks into the Word of God, he will see two things—his own sin and the sinless Savior and Lord. When such a person sees and responds to Christ and then lives out the Word, he is blessed in the doing. (SEE [James MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 82](#))

**Hiebert** - The reflection of ancient mirrors was often imperfect, as Paul implies in 1Co 13:12, but generally they were adequate for an individual to gain a good view of himself.

## Spurgeon says that...

to every hearer, the true Word of God is as a **mirror**. Certain preachers dream that it is their business to paint pretty pictures, but it is not so. We are not to design and sketch, but simply to give the reflection of the Truth of God. We are to hold up the mirror to nature, in a moral and spiritual sense, and let men see themselves. We have not even to make the mirror, but only to hold it up! The thoughts of God—not our own thoughts—are to be set before our hearers' minds—these allow a man to discover himself. The Word of the Lord is a revealer of secrets—it shows a man his life, his thoughts, his heart, his inmost self.

A large proportion of hearers only look upon the surface of the gospel, and upon their minds the surface alone is operative. Yet, even that surface is sufficiently effectual to reflect the natural face which looks upon it, and this may be of lasting service if rightly followed up. Brethren, the chief blessing cannot come to us by surface-work; he that would be enriched by the gospel must dig for it, and must dig deep. He must sink shafts into its fathomless mines, that he may bring up "the much fine gold." (Ps 19:10-[Spurgeon's note](#)) Let not our thoughts glide over the surface of the Word like swift birds that touch the crests of the waves; but let us plunge into the depths of Scripture like pearl-fishers who seek for hid treasures.

The Scripture gives a truthful reflection of man's nature: it lets the man see himself, not as others see him, for others make mistakes, nor as he would see himself, for he is very apt to be partial to his own soul; but the Scripture makes him see himself as God sees him. Look at the scriptural portrait of a sinner. That art thou, O man! Look at the depraved heart, the rebellious will, the darkened understanding: that heart, will, and understanding are thine, O my brother! What a sight it is which meets the sinner's eye when he is hearing the faithful Word! "I thought," saith he, as he looks into the Word, "that I was much more, comely than this. I had never dreamed of these freckles and spots. I was not aware that I suffered from such a twist of features, such an exaggeration of one and such a deficiency in another."

The holy Book does not flatter human nature, neither does the true preacher attempt so base a work; but in plain and downright honesty of truth the witness is given, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. When conscience is aroused, and the man sees himself as the revelation of God declares him to be, he can hardly think that this can be the same self with which he was upon such excellent terms. If God blesses the sight, he is led to abhor himself, and to seek for cleansing and renewal; but if not, the man has at least seen himself, and has had the opportunity of knowing his two state.

The reflection of self in the Word is very like life. You have, perhaps, seen a dog so astonished at his image in the glass that he has barked fiercely at himself. A parrot will mistake its reflection for a rival. Well may the creature wonder, since every one of its movements is so accurately copied; it thinks itself to be mocked. Under a true preacher men are often so thoroughly unearthed and laid bare that even the details of their lives are reported. Not only is the portrait drawn to the life, but it is an actually living portrait which is given in the mirror of the Word. There is little need to point with the finger, and say, "thou art the man," for the hearer perceives of his own accord that he is spoken of. As the image in the glass moves, and alters its countenance, and changes its appearance, so doth the Word of the Lord set forth man in his many phases, and moods, and conditions. The Scripture of truth knows all about him, and it tells him what it knows. Many a time the hearer has said, "Somebody has told the preacher." Yes, somebody has told him: that which thou doest in thy bedchamber the Lord hath revealed unto his servant. The Holy Spirit "aides our hands wittingly, so that we lay them upon the right heads. I have sometimes said to you that people frequently wish that the preacher knew their experience, in order that he could preach to it; but it is not necessary to tell God's sent servant anything about it, for he will speak to you with all the more power because he does not know. You may go in to hear the sermon, and be wearing a disguise, but even a blind prophet will find you out, and say, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, wherefore feignest thou thyself to be another woman? I have heavy tidings from the Lord for thee." The Chaldean soothsayers said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation"; but Daniel knew the dream and the interpretation also, and that marked him out as being sent of God. When the preacher's description of the man's heart is true to the life, and yet no human mouth has whispered it into his ears, then the man cries, "This is the finger of God." A great part of the self-evidencing power of the gospel lies in the way in which it discovers to our minds that which aforesaid lay within our bosoms, hidden even from ourselves.

The glass of the Word is not like our ordinary looking-glass, which merely shows us our external features; but, according to the Greek of our text, the man sees in it "the face of his birth"; that is, the face of his nature. He that reads and hears the Word may see not only his actions there, but his motives, his desires, his inward

condition. As the butcher cuts down the carcass, and reveals all the inwards, which never could have been seen but for his knife, so is the Word of God “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (He 4:12, 13-see notes) The secrets of the man are opened up to himself, and he is astonished to see his inward depravity, his carnal tendencies, and his corrupt inclinations. As a man sees his outward self in the looking-glass, so may he see his inward self in the Word; but if this be all, to what purpose, is it? ([Ref](#))

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**Mirror, Mirror** - How often do you see your reflection in a mirror? Some studies say that the average person looks in a mirror 8 to 10 times a day. Other surveys say it could be as many as 60 to 70 times a day, if glancing at our reflection in store windows and smart phone screens is included.

Why do we look so often? Most experts agree that it's to check our appearance, especially before meetings or social gatherings. If something is amiss, we want to fix it. Why look if we don't plan to change what's wrong?

The apostle James said that reading or hearing God's Word without acting on it is like looking in a mirror and forgetting what we've seen (1Pe 1:22-24). But the better alternative is to look closely and act on what we see. James said, “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” (1Pe 1:25).

If we hear God's Word without taking action, we fool only ourselves (1Pe 1:22). But when we examine ourselves in light of God's Word and obey His instructions, God liberates us from all that keeps us from looking more and more like Him each day. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Thank You, Lord, for the Bible, Your Word to us.  
Give us wisdom and guidance as we  
read its pages. Make us sensitive to Your  
voice and give us hearts to obey.

**The Bible is a mirror that lets us see ourselves as God sees us.**

INSIGHT: Various metaphors are used in Scripture to describe God's Word: a mirror (James 1:23); fire and a hammer (Jer. 23:29), a lamp (Ps. 119:105), water (Eph. 5:26), a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12), a seed (1 Peter 1:23), food (Job 23:12), and milk (1 Peter 2:2). The Word of God reveals, consumes, breaks, illuminates, purifies, convicts, regenerates, satisfies, and nourishes the believer. It is not enough to know God's Word; we need to obey it (James 1:22-25).

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**The Mirror** - Years ago, Walter A. Maier, an eloquent radio preacher, told about an African tribal chief who was presented with a mirror by a visitor. He peered curiously into the glass and commented on the ugliness of the person he saw. When he realized he was looking at himself, he became enraged and smashed the mirror on a rock.

The apostle James described God's Word as a mirror in which we can see ourselves reflected (1:23-24). It shows us that although we were created to reflect God's character, in our fallen condition we are spiritually ugly and marred by sin.

But when we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we are spiritually reborn (John 3:3-8). Then, as we look into God's Word, we see ourselves as God sees us—our ugliness has been transformed into the beauty of Christ's likeness. And we grow in His likeness from that point on.

What do you see as you look into the mirror of Scripture? Do you hesitate to read the Bible because it shows you the ugly appearance of your unbelief? Or do you read it gratefully, seeing yourself as God the Father sees you—as His spiritually reborn child, who is becoming more and more like His beloved Son? (2 Corinthians 3:18). Having Jesus in your life makes the difference. — Vernon C. Grounds

The Bible, O Lord, is just like a mirror  
That shows me the need of my heart,  
For in it I see an accurate image,  
A portrait of me—every part. —Hess

**The Word of God is the only mirror that can transform our appearance.**

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Unbelief, indifference, busyness, and laziness are some of the excuses people give for not reading the Bible. Gamaliel

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Bradford, a renowned American biographer who explored the lives and motives of famous individuals, candidly admitted, "I do not read the New Testament for fear of its awakening a storm of anxiety and self-reproach and doubt and dread of having taken the wrong path, of having been traitor to the plain and simple God."

Fear of facing up to failure, guilt and sin is not a very reasonable reason to avoid reading the Bible! It's about as irrational as refusing to see a doctor because there's a suspicion that cancer has started to develop in one's body.

Yes, the Bible does indeed compel us to face ourselves. It is like an x-ray machine that penetrates below the facade of goodness and shows up any spiritual malignancy. It enables us to see how God views all the worst diseases of the soul. But the Bible does more than expose a fatal condition. It introduces us to the Great Physician, who can cure our sin and bring spiritual healing.

If you read the Bible with a willingness to obey the truth, you will find life's greatest cure. - Vernon Grounds (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Instill within our hearts, dear Lord,  
A deep desire to know Your voice;  
We need to learn to hear  
Your Word That we may make  
Your will our choice. -Dennis De Haan

**Many people criticize the Bible  
because the bible criticizes them.**

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**Constant Companion** - When my wife and I are preparing for a trip, one of the first things we do is get out the road atlas. We study it intensely to learn the best routes, determine the number of miles we'll have to travel, pick out interesting places to visit, decide how far we can get in a day, and estimate expenses. On the journey, the atlas is our constant companion, and we consult it many times a day. We couldn't get along without it.

For Christians, the Bible is an atlas for their spiritual journey, but it is much more. It is described as:

sweeter than honey (Psalm 19:10-[note](#); Ps 119:103-[note](#))

a lamp (Psalm 119:105-[note](#))

rain and snow (Isaiah 55:10,11)

a fire (Jeremiah 23:29)

a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29)

water (Ephesians 5:26-note)

a sword (Ephesians 6:17-note)

solid food (Hebrews 5:12-note, He 5:14-note)

a mirror (James 1:23-note)

milk (1Peter 2:2-note)

Like the highway traveler, we as Christians are on a long and sometimes hazardous journey. We face many decisions and will have many needs on our pilgrimage to paradise. The Bible has been given to us to help us make those decisions and to meet those needs. It should be our constant companion—studied diligently and consulted often along the way. We can't do without it. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

I have a companion, a dear, faithful friend,  
A union of blessing that never shall end;  
Till Jesus returns with His saints from on high  
We'll travel together, my Bible and I. —Anon

The Bible is like a compass—  
it always points the believer in the right direction.

James 1:24 for *once* he has [looked](#) at [himself](#) and [gone away](#), he has [immediately forgotten what kind](#) of [person](#) he was. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [katanoesen](#) (3SAAI) [gar](#) [heauton](#) [kai](#) [apeleluthen](#) (3SRAI) [kai](#) [eutheos](#) [epelatheto](#) (3SAMI) [hopoios](#) [en](#). (3SIAI)

**Amplified:** For he thoughtfully observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ASV:** for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

**Hiebert:** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

**KJV:** For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

**NLT:** You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** He sees himself, it is true, but he goes on with whatever he was doing without the slightest recollection of what sort of person he saw in the mirror. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Young's Literal:** for he did view himself, and hath gone away, and immediately he did forget of what kind he was;

**FOR ONCE HE HAS LOOKED AT HIMSELF AND GONE AWAY: katanoesen (3SAAI) gar heauton kai apeleluthen (3SRAI)**

- Judges 8:18; Matthew 8:27; Luke 1:66; 7:39; 1Th 1:5; 2Pe 3:11
- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JUST ONE LOOK AND HE'S GONE

What is important is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you! Are you looking but not letting it go through you?

**Spurgeon** - It is a good thing for him to do that, to see himself as others see him. "Beholding his natural face," even as men in looking into the Word of God, behold the face of their nature; they see what they are like as they look into the glass... The best thing to do when you look into a glass, and spy a spot on your face, is to wash it off directly. The true use of hearing the Word, or reading it, is to amend one's self at once in those points in which the Word discovers us to be faulty. To look in the glass, and not to wash off the spots, is but a piece of vanity; and to hear a sermon, or read a chapter, and not to put into practice what we are taught, is a sad waste of time. ([James](#))

For ([gar](#)) ([gar](#)) introduces an explanation, explaining how one is a hearer only and not a doer of the Word heard.

**Looked** ([2657](#)) (**katanoeo** from **kata** = down [kata can be used to intensify the meaning] + **noéo** = to perceive or think) means literally to put the mind down on something and so to observe or consider carefully and attentively. It means to fix one's eyes or mind upon and to perceive clearly. **Katanoeo** means to look carefully, cautiously, observantly. The idea is to think about something very carefully or consider closely which denotes the action of one's mind apprehending certain facts about a thing so as to give one the proper and decisive thought about the thing considered.

**Himself** ([1438](#)) (**heautou**) is a reflexive pronoun referring the action in the verb back to its own subject. The idea is brought out more emphatically that this person is looking at his face, even if someone else is in the room. The idea when coupled with the verb katanoeo is that this is not just a glance but more of a gaze and that the object of the gaze is me, myself, I.

**Gone away** ([565](#)) (**aperchomai**) means to depart or move away from a point of reference, in this case picturing him walking away from the mirror.

**Richison** writes that "The idea of "goes away" carries the thought of leaving permanently. He does not want to return to the Word because it exposes him for what he is.

**Spurgeon** comments that

He heard the Word, and there was an end of it; no echoes lingered in his soul. The sermon was over when it was over. Many a man, having seen himself in the glass of the Word, has no time for any further thought about himself. To-morrow morning he will be over head and ears in business; the shutters will be down from his shop-windows, but they will be put up to the windows of his soul. His office needs him, and therefore his prayer-closet cannot have him; his ledger falls like an avalanche over his Bible. The man has no time to seek the true riches; passing trifles monopolize his mind. Sirs, ye call earthly things "business"; but the salvation or the damnation of your souls is such a bidding matter that any stray hour will suffice for it. Is it not so? Do you not propose to put off the Lord till your last gasp? The Lord deliver you from this madness! Oh, that you would no more allow your earthly business to crush your souls!

Others have no particular business to engross them, but having seen themselves in the glass of the Word with some degree of interest, they go their way to their amusements. Their principal difficulty is how to kill time, and spin the weary hours away. What will become of some of you who are going down to perdition with all your time to spare? You will not be able to say that you went your way to your farm, and to your merchandise, for you have neither farm nor merchandise, and do not know what to do with your time; and yet for all that you cannot spare an hour to think upon your souls and upon your God. Oh, that it were not so! May infinite mercy make men wiser than to go their way while their souls are going down to hell!

Alas! there are some who go their way to sin. It is not mere pleasure, or business, but it is an overt act of transgression to which they go. It is an awful thing to my mind that men go from hearing the Word of God to speaking the word of the devil; they go from God's house to the house of sin; they go straight away from the holy to the profane, from the pure to the foul. They go from the mercy-seat to the seat of the scorner. I do not wonder that no good comes of such hearing as this. When a man seeth his face in the glass, and then goeth his way to defile that face more and more, of what use is the glass to him? If you return to sin, to procrastinate, to live in willful neglect of God and eternity, you would derive no benefit from such hearing, though all the apostles should in turn preach to you, or even their Master himself. ([Ref](#))

**HE HAS IMMEDIATELY FORGOTTEN WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE WAS: kai eutheos epelatheto (3SAMI) hopios en. (3SIAI):**

- James 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **HOW QUICKLY WE FORGET HOW FALLEN OUR FLESH IS!**

**Wiersbe** observes that "They fail to obey what the Word tells them to do. They think that hearing is the same as doing, and it is not. We Christians enjoy substituting reading for doing, or even talking for doing. We hold endless committee meetings and conferences about topics like evangelism and church growth, and think we have made progress. While there is certainly nothing wrong with conferences and committee meetings, they are sinful if they are a substitute for service. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Popular author **Jerry Bridges** wrote that "As we search the Scriptures, we must allow them to search us, to sit in judgement upon our character and conduct."

**Immediately** (2112) ([eutheos](#) from euthus = straight) means at once, straightway, forthwith.

**Forgotten** (1950) ([epilanthomai](#) from **epi** = in or upon - intensifies meaning of following verb + **lanthano** = to escape notice, to lie hidden) means to not remember something. It conveys 2 basic nuances in the NT, to **forget** (not recall information concerning something) or to **neglect** (give little attention to, to omit by carelessness or design). The **epi**- preposition intensifies the meaning as noted and thus the idea is not just forgetting but "**completely forgetting**." The [present tense](#) indicates that this is to be the Spirit filled believer's continual exercise - forget and forget completely! In Philippians 3:13+ Paul makes a conscious (Spirit empowered) choice to not recall information concerning things in his past that would only encumber his running with endurance. Paul uses an illustration of a Greek runner completely **forgetting** his opponents he is leading in a race (see [Athletic Metaphor](#)). Paul knew if the runner began to think of the men behind him, the



pounding of their pace, his speed might slacken. So Paul presses home the lesson that when a child of God remembers his past failures, the things he should have done and failed to do, the things he did which he should not have done -- all of these have the potential to impede or hinder our forward progress in the Christian life. When a Christian has confessed and sought the gift of repentance and made things "right" with God and his fellow-man, the next step is to completely forget them. The man described here by James is the antithesis of Paul's example. This man needed to remember who he was in his fleshly state that he might get right with God.

Tragically **forgetfulness** has always plague fallen men as the large numbers of uses of **epilanthano** in the Septuagint (LXX) testify (98 uses versus only 8 NT uses - Mt 16:5; Mk 8:14; Lk 12:6; Php 3:13; He 6:10; 13:2, 16; Jas 1:24).

If you have time, study through these OT Scriptures, most of which deal with Israel, and let their **forgetfulness** spur you on to not repeat their mistake -

Ge 27:45; 40:23; 41:30, 51; Dt. 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7; 24:19; 25:19; 26:13; 31:21; 32:18; Jdg. 3:7; 1Sa 12:9; 2 Ki. 17:38; Job 8:13; 9:27; 11:16; 19:14; 28:4; 39:15; Ps 9:12, 17, 18; 10:11, 12; 13:1; 31:12; 42:9; 44:17, 20, 24; 45:10; 50:22; 59:11; 74:19, 23; 77:9; 78:7, 11; 88:12; 102:4; 103:2; 106:13, 21; 119:16, 30, 61, 83, 93, 109, 139, 141, 153, 176; 137:5; Pr 2:17; 3:1; 4:5; 31:5, 7; Eccl 2:16; 9:5; Is 23:16; 44:21; 49:14, 15; 51:13; 54:4; 65:11, 16; Je 2:32; 3:21; 13:25; 14:9; 18:15; 20:11; 23:27, 40; 30:14; 44:9; 50:5, 6; La 2:6; 3:17; 5:20; Ezek 22:12; 23:35; Ho 2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6; Amos 8:7.

Note especially the resolve of the godly man **to not forget** God's Word (law, precept, etc) in Ps 119:16, 6183, 93, 109, 141, 153, 176

I agree with **Steven Cole's** interpretation of the **forgetfulness**...

I think that James is not describing a man with a poor memory, but rather a man with poor priorities. He doesn't remember what he saw in the mirror because he doesn't regard it as very important. God, heaven, eternal life, and all of the other doctrines in the Bible are interesting and nice, but this guy has a career to pursue. He's got money to make. He's got his hobbies and toys that are his passion on his days off. He forgets what God's word says about his sins because, really, it just isn't all that important compared to these other priorities in his life.

The problem of forgetting God is a frequent theme in the Old Testament. Moses warned Israel (Dt. 6:12), after they got into the land, "then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Just two chapters later (Dt 8:2), he repeats, "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you ...."

Ps 103:2 warns God's people to "forget none of His benefits." It promises that the Lord's lovingkindness is on those who "remember His precepts to do them" (Ps 103:18b).

Psalms 106:7 warns of how "our fathers in Egypt ... did not remember Your abundant kindnesses ...."

In Ps 106:13 he states, "They quickly forgot His works; ..."

He adds in Ps 106:21, "They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt"

One of the last commands in the Old Testament is (Mal 4:4), "Remember the law of Moses My servant, ..."

**Israel didn't have a memory problem. They had a priority problem.** God's commandments just weren't all that important to them. They had other things that were more pressing. All parents have experienced this with their children. You ask them to clean their room. You come back in an hour, and they're playing, but their room hasn't been touched. You say, "I told you to clean your room," and they reply, "I forgot!" Right! It's not that your child has a memory problem. Cleaning his room just isn't very high on his priority list, until you impose a stiff enough penalty to push it up to the top! So hearers-only take a quick glance in the mirror of the word, but they don't do anything to fix the problems that they see. They forget what they see because other things are more important ([James 1:22-27 Doers of the Word](#)) (Bolding added for emphasis)

**Spurgeon** ([The Looking-Glass](#)) comments that

This going away is followed by **forgetting** all they have seen. This **forgetfulness** is indeed very mischievous. How different is this from that word of David, "I will never forget thy precepts"! (Ps 119:93, note the author of Ps 119 is not known with certainty) The wicked forget God; but the favored of the Lord "remember his commandments to do them." (Ps 103:18)

Forget the words of man, but be zealous to remember the Word of the Lord; for forgetfulness leads to inaction. Those who forget, forget to do. They follow not the Lord's command in the Book of Numbers:

**“Remember to do all my commandments.”**

(Nu 15:39, 40)

In Purchas's Pilgrim we read of certain Spaniards of the olden time who were often pinched with hunger, and yet immense shoals of fish passed along their shores. They saw the fish, but were too idle to take them. Are there not many hearers of that kind? The truth passes by them unappropriated, unused, unpracticed, and all because they take no earnest heed to make it their own by personal obedience to it. They say, "I go, sir," but they forget to go. They see the pearl of great price, but forget to buy it. They are mere players with the Lord's message, and never come to honest dealing with it.

**Forgetfulness** of the Word leads to self-satisfaction. Looking in the glass the man felt a little startled that he was such an ugly fellow, but he went his way and mingled with the crowd, and forgot what manner of man he was, and therefore he felt quite easy again. The sweep thinks he is as clean as his neighbors, for he has forgotten the soot upon his face. By the force of sheer ignorance a man can climb to a desperately false assurance of his own excellence. He can cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace (Je 6:14, 8:11), till at length a blast of trumpets will not alarm him. What can be more fatal than this? One may as well not know, as only learn and straightway forget.

This **forgetfulness** leads to a growing carelessness. A man who has once looked in the glass, and afterwards has not washed, is very apt to go and look in the glass again, and continue in his filthiness. He who thinks his conscience has cried "wolf" in mere sport, will think the same till he takes no heed when it cries in earnest. When men get to play with the Word of God they are near to destruction. Beware of hearing the gospel as a pastime: it is the next stage to eternal ruin. When that which God designs to be to our salvation becomes a pastime to us, then all likelihood that it will save us is gone. He who sports with heaven and hell will soon lose all hope of the one, and be hurried downward to the other.

Yes, but let me remark that this **forgetfulness** of the Word leads to increased sin; for we do not hear the Word of God without venue result coming of it. As I am responsible for preaching, so are you for hearing. O unconverted hearers, you to whom the gospel has come as a revealer of yourselves, but not as a renewer of your hearts, you have grown harder in sin, and you have sinned against more light and against more knowledge, and thus your sin grows blacker! [The Looking-Glass](#)

In another sermon on this Verse **Spurgeon** says

One other thing is said about them, namely, that they are very **forgetful hearers** - they forget what manner of men they are. They have heard the discourse, and there is an end of it.

You know the story of Donald's coming home a little sooner from kirk than usual, and his wife enquiring, "What! Donald! is the sermon all done?" He replied, "No, no; it is all said, but it has not begun to be done yet." But while it has not begun to be done, it often happens that the sermon has ended with many hearers. They have listened to it, but it has ran through them like water through a sieve, and they will recollect no more of it till the judgment-day.

There is no sin in having a bad memory, but there is great sin in refusing at once to obey the gospel. If you cannot recollect the text, or even remember the subject to-morrow morning, I shall not blame you; but the recollection of the spirit of the whole thing, the drinking in and absorption into yourself of the truth, - that is the main matter, and the carrying of the truth into practice is the essence of the business. That travelling dealer did well who, while listening to Mr. William Dawson, when he was speaking about dishonesty, stood up in the midst of the congregation and broke a certain yard measure with which he had been in the habit of cheating his customers. That woman did well who said that she forgot what the preacher talked about, but she remembered to burn her bushel when she got home, for that too had been short in measure. Never mind about remembering the sermon, if you remember at once to practice it. You may forget the words in which the truth was couched, if you will, but let it purify your life. It reminds me of the gracious woman who used to earn her living by washing wool. When her minister called upon her and asked her about his sermon, and she confessed that she had forgotten the text, he said, "What good could it have done you?" She took him into her back place, where she was carrying on her trade. She put the wool into a sieve, and then pumped on it. "There, sir," she said, "your sermon is like that water. It runs through my mind, sir, just as the water runs through the sieve; but, then the water washes the wool, sir, and so the good word washes my soul." David in

the hundred and third psalm speaks of those who remember the Lord's commandments to do them, and that is the best of memory. Mind that you have it. ([James 1:22-25 Two Sorts of Hearers](#))

**What kind of** ([3697](#)) means what sort of (speaks of quality).

As **Richison** says "This man looked into the mirror and saw clearly he had a character flaw but he neglected the Word and moved on. He does not allow the Word to make any impact on his character. He does not want to change his character because it might affect some value he holds dearly, contrary to God's plan for his life. The only way we can truly see ourselves through God's eyes is to carefully look into the mirror of God's Word. If we do not know we have cancer, we will not go for surgery. If a non-Christian does not see herself as sinful, she will see no need for a Saviour. If a Christian does not see her sin, she will not confess sin."

**He was** ([2258](#)) (**eimi**) is the imperfect tense of **eimi**.

**Hiebert** - With the revelation in the mirror no longer before him, his mind centered its interest on other things and "immediately" (*eutheos*) he forgot what he had seen. This failure to act demonstrated the evanescent nature of the impression made by the view in the mirror. This picture of inaction in the physical realm aptly illustrates the superficial and temporary effect of his listening to God's Word without letting it direct his conduct. ([Ibid](#))

**Spurgeon** writes that "The best thing to do when you look into a glass, and spy a spot on your face, is to wash it off directly. The true use of hearing the Word, or reading it, is to amend one's self at once in those points in which the Word discovers us to be faulty. To look in the glass, and not to wash off the spots, is but a piece of vanity; and to hear a sermon, or read a chapter, and not to put into practice what we are taught, is a sad waste of time. [Spurgeon's Verse Expositions ...](#)

**Kistemaker** sums up this section noting that "Here is the point of comparison. The person who looks into the mirror to see his own image and promptly forgets is like a person who hears the Word of God proclaimed but fails to respond to it. He sees his reflection in the mirror, quickly adjusts his external appearance, and walks away. He hears the gospel preached, makes minor adjustments, and goes his own way. But the gospel is unable to penetrate his heart and cannot change the internal disposition of man. The mirror is an object used to alter man's external appearance; the Word, however, confronts man internally and demands a response. Why does a person forget what he looks like almost as soon as he walks away from the mirror? That seems incredible and yet it is true. Many people hear a sermon on a given Sunday and a week later cannot remember a single word of that sermon. The person who only listens to the Word goes away and fails to respond to its demands. ([Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. Vol. 14: New Testament commentary : Exposition of James and the Epistles of John. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.](#))