

The Bible Lived Out

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[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship now. We're singing firstly today from Psalm 122. Psalm 122, that is in the Scottish Psalter version on page 416 of Tunis St. Paul.

I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall standing be. Words that people of Israel sang long ago when they made their way up to the temple to worship the Lord and express their joy in going as well as in arriving.

And it's our great privilege as well to come together, together as they did, as we come together today. Let's express our joy and thankfulness to God with these great words.

Tunis St. Paul, when we stand to sing, I joyed when to the house of God. I joyed when to the house of God, O what is said to me?

Jerusalem within thy gates, how ye shall stand in thee?

[1 : 21] Jerusalem within thy gates, how ye shall stand in thee?

Jerusalem within thy gates, how ye shall stand in thee?

Jerusalem within thy gates, how ye shall stand in thee?

Within thy walls remain And never may thy promises Prosperity retain Thou, for my friends and brethren, say Peace be heavy and safe And for the hands of Father Lord And seek thy good away Let's now join together in prayer briefly Praying especially for the children and the young folks at the moment Lord our God, we give thanks again that we are able to gather as we have been singing

In this place of worship A place that has been used for so many years To seek to glorify the Lord and to give thanks for all his goodness And we pray today, Lord, for our children, young folks We pray for them whether they be in creche or tweenies or Sunday school or Bible class We ask your blessing for them all You know their circumstances You know their different capacities of age We commend them to you, O Lord And we pray for them For it is the desire of our hearts to see them following in the ways of the Lord And we pray today that what they receive in teaching And in ways in which your word is explained to them We pray that that will continue to be beneficial to them And a blessing to them And indeed to their parents and loved ones as well Bless the teachers, we pray And the carers and all who look after Our young folk in creche and tweenies Who teach in the Sunday school and the Bible class We thank you for them

[4 : 53] And we pray that they may know your blessing As they seek to impart that teaching to the young folk And help us to be thankful as a congregation When we have so many young families And so many children and young people who belong to us And Lord, we ask that your blessing will be with us To provide for us in regard to all of these needs Hear us now, we pray And pardon our sin For Jesus' sake Amen Well, today I'm following what the syllabus is for the Sunday school And the Sunday school syllabus today At least on the sheet that I've got Has to do with Saul King Saul in the Old Testament Being rejected by God as king There are two chapters in the Old Testament In 1 Samuel chapter 13 And 1 Samuel 15 Where we find God saying that he had rejected Saul From being king

Now something serious must have really happened Before God would have rejected him From being king Having already had him anointed as king over the people And that's true When you read these two passages in 1 Samuel You'll discover why it was that God rejected him The first passage really was God having said through Samuel To Saul to wait in a certain place for seven days Until Samuel had come back And then he would actually go from there To somewhere else And Saul waited for the seven days Samuel hadn't yet appeared So Saul decided I'll just do the sacrifice myself And so that's what he did And before he was finished Samuel appeared And Samuel told him That he had done wrong That he was actually disobeying the Lord And the ways that the Lord Had set out for his worship And for sacrifice He should have waited for Samuel

Even though he thought Well he's late So I'll just do it myself That was the problem with Saul there That's the problem with Saul also In 1 Samuel 15 What Saul was really doing In both cases Was doing what he thought was best Instead of following God's direction He actually decided to do it his way And to do it in a way that was different To the way God had specified And that means In each of these cases He was being disobedient to God And that was really serious And it's still a serious thing for us as well Because obedience to God Is one of the marks Of a genuine Christian Obedience to God is important In the life of a Christian It doesn't matter what age we're at Even when we are actually older We're still, as Christians

Required to obey God To obey him in everything That he sets out We need to do and be for him So it's an important mark Of a Christian To have obedience to God And when Saul was being disobedient God saw that as being very serious Especially for a man Who had been made king Over Israel And also that's why God Rejected him And afterwards David took Saul's place As king over Israel So for you as young folk today It's important for yourselves That whenever we don't do What God says we should do We're being disobedient And whenever we do What God said we don't do That's also being disobedient And when we're disobedient to God Well that is something that God Is not pleased with God is pleased with Our obedience to him And we show our obedience to him

When we accept him When we love him When we serve him When we want him To be the most important person In our lives This is what Jesus said In John chapter 3 And verse 36 And I want you to notice How Jesus combined together Faith, believing And also obeying This is what he said Whoever believes in the Son That's Jesus himself Whoever believes in the Son Has eternal life Whoever does not obey the Son Shall not see life But the wrath of God Remains on him You can see from that That believing in Jesus Involves obeying Jesus And obeying Jesus Involves believing in Jesus You can't have the one Without the other So today Our obedience Is so important

[9 : 57] Whatever age we are at Okay so we'll say The Lord's Prayer now together Our Father Which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name Thy kingdom come Thy will be done On earth As it is in heaven Give us this day Our daily bread And forgive us our debts As we forgive our debtors And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil For thine is the kingdom The power and the glory Forever Amen I'm going to sing again now To God's praise In Psalm 119 Psalm 119 Again it's the Scottish Psalter On page 407 407 June this time is Wiltshire Thy word forever is O Lord In heaven settled fast And to all generations Thy faithfulness Doth last All our singings today

Refer to the word of God Because our sermon's Going to focus on Our word On the word And our being doers Of the word From the epistle of James Psalm 119 At verse 89 Thy word forever is O Lord In heaven settled fast Fast Thy word for him But this O Lord In heaven settled fast Unto all generations Thy faithfulness Thy faithfulness The past The earth of us Establish it

And it applies by thee This day they stand As the Lord be For all thy servants be Unless in thy most perfect law My soul delights are found I should not perish My soul delights are found My soul delights are found Thy peace and sight Will never forget Everything to be brought

Everything to be brought Lord I am thine For save thou me Thine peace set thine out Out For all thy Thine peace and soul For all thy wicked Thine peace and soul For all thy wicked Thine peace and soul Thy dead Thy dreams with joy.

I can know all perfection. Here have I see thee O Lord.

[14 : 16] But else for I commanded it is exceeding cross.

Let's turn to read God's word now. We're reading from the epistle, the letter of James and chapter 1 from the beginning. The letter of James chapter 1 page 1215 or so in your church Bibles if you're using these.

So James chapter 1 we'll read from the beginning. James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes of the dispersion greetings.

Count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.

if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind for that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

[15 : 45] He is a double-minded man unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation because like a flower of the grass he will pass away for the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass its flower falls and its beauty perishes so also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted I am being tempted by God for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Do not be deceived my beloved brothers every good gift and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Know this my beloved brothers let every person be quick to hear slow to speak slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

[17 : 23] Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror for he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law the law of liberty and perseveres being no longer one who forgets but a doer who acts he will be blessed in his doing.

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart this person's religion is worthless religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

May the Lord add his blessing to our reading that portion of his word. Let's join together again once more in prayer. Lord we thank you today for your word.

[18 : 41] We thank you for all that it contains. We thank you for the way that you took account of our needs as you caused your word to be written down over the centuries. We thank you therefore that your word is both authoritative and also relevant to our needs that it is backed up by your authority and by your knowledge of us.

And we ask today that your word will be blessed to us and prized by us. Help us Lord to be like the psalmist who could say that he treasured your word in his heart so that he would not sin against you.

As we come before you Lord and around your word Lord we pray today for your Holy Spirit to open our minds to give us an understanding of your word and to enable us to carry it forward in our lives so that we may be as this passage says to us a doers of your word and not hearers only.

We give thanks Lord for each and every one that comes today to gather together with your people everywhere throughout the world. We know that we belong to a great volume of people, a great multitude of people most of whom we don't know and yet they are all known to you and all known to you intimately and personally.

We thank you that your word assures us that you know even the number of the hairs on our head that you are able to deal with every aspect of our need however great or however small it may be.

[20 : 10] Lord we pray today that you bless us here as a people, bless us as we gather as a congregation, bless us with our individual concerns, with our family concerns, with our concerns in the wider sense for our community, for our nation, for the world in which we live.

we give thanks that we are able to express these to you in prayer and that we are able as we sing your praises also to take account of the words that we are singing and recognize that in so many respects the things that we see in our world and in our society are not new but have been features of the world at different times in the way in which human beings have lived and interacted together.

We ask today oh God that we here may be thankful for all the goodness that you keep showing to us for the ways in which we know your blessing already to have affected and touched our lives.

We pray today that that will be added to as we seek further blessing here Lord from you at this time. We give thanks again for all that we can reflect on that you have done for us and you continue to do for us as a people.

We pray today Lord that your work amongst us will continue that we will see much fruit for the way in which the gospel is presented and your people serve you that we will see many others coming to be joined to you and to walk in your ways and to give themselves to the work of the gospel in the different ways in which we would seek oh Lord to serve you and to hold forth the word of life in our community.

[21 : 51] Remember us in all our activities. Remember us in everything Lord that we seek to do in conjunction with your worship and the preaching of your word. We pray that today Lord we may follow with our own prayers everything that's happening already in regard to our young people in regard to the various ways in which we anticipate this week meetings to take place associated with your truth and with the gospel and with your people.

And grant Lord to continue to remember us and to provide for us. Remember us in terms of the practical and financial needs of the congregation too.

Lord we recognize in your providence that we live in difficult and testing times even in regard to these things even though we know that they are not as hard and testing as they are for many others throughout the nation and even throughout the world.

Nevertheless Lord give us we pray to be dedicated to the upholding of your cause and we thank you for the measure in which this is already the place with us as a people.

Remember now those who are ill of our number we pray for them today oh Lord and ask that you'd bless them whether at home or in hospital or in care homes receiving treatment or looking forward to such.

[23 : 13] Lord we pray for them and ask that your healing hand will be upon them where that is pleasing to you. We pray for those who mourn over loved ones gone and the death of loved ones Lord is something that features in our congregational life from week to week and we commend to you today those families those individuals who have lost loved ones in recent days in recent weeks and months and even in past years we Lord commend them to you for we know that bereavement and the sorrow and the absence of loved ones is something that remains with us all our days and we pray oh Lord as you are the one who promises to be a father to the fatherless and the widow stay we pray that you would prove yourself oh Lord to be for us one who is dependable at all times and consistent in the way in which you keep your promises.

Remember the world in which we live we bring before you today Lord all the troubles of the world and the troubled parts of the world and we pray that you would bless where there is war and conflict and we know that there are many places Lord where this is the case throughout the world even in addition to the ones we regularly have featured on our news reports.

Be merciful to us Lord we pray throughout our human society and turn us into your ways and be pleased to bring the quickening effects of the gospel to bear upon our world as we pray as we have already read in the Lord's prayer that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And we ask Lord today that you would also be pleased to bless us as a nation. Lord we are so concerned from week to week at the ways in which we find violence and protest turned into violence and ideologies that are contrary to the gospel upheld and exalted and praised.

Be merciful to us Lord we pray as a people and turn us into your ways and help us to value again the gospel and its message and the testimony of your church throughout the ages that there is no other name given under heaven but the name of Jesus by which we must be saved.

[25 : 38] Be merciful to those who are over us in power and authority in our governments and with the king and all others Lord who have places of authority and influence and importance throughout our land.

You have called upon us Lord to pray for those in authority and to pray that we may live peaceable lives and that we might have a society where the gospel will flourish.

And so we do pray for these things today. We ask now that you'd bless us and further guide us in our praise and in our thoughts upon your word and as we seek to set it forth in the preaching of your word.

Be with us Lord we pray in all aspects of this. Forgive our sins and cleanse us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Well we'll sing once again before we turn to the scriptures singing this time in Psalm 19.

This time it's in the Sing Psalms version. You'll find that on page 23 of the psalm books. Page 23 and we're singing verses 7 to 11.

[26 : 46] The tune is St. John. The perfect law of God revives the soul of man. The statutes which are sure make wise the simple one. The precepts of the Lord are right and fill the heart with great delight.

Words again which celebrate the word of God and the effects of God's word when it's blessed to us and how it brings to our hearts such joy when we rejoice in the Lord through it.

These verses then 7 to 11. The perfect law of God revives the soul of man. The perfect law of God revives the soul of man.

His statutes which are sure make wise the simple one.

The perfect law of God. The perfect law of God. The perfect law of God. The perfect law of God. The perfect law of God. And fill the heart with great delight.

[27 : 58] God with great delight. cybt Correction And the perfect law of God. The perfect law of God. Who will the perfect law of God. Gnly-ié-ered Furnit-Lyem. Check light on what we see.

The fear of God is pure, and lasts eternally. The standards of the Lord express His perfect truth and righteousness.

Of our worth and gold, and what pure Lord they are, and our money from the gold, and our money sweeter fine.

May or the servant of the Lord and keep in heaven's day reward.

Now let's turn together, as we wait on the Lord, to James chapter 1. Today we're looking at verses 22 to 25, and I'm going to read again from verse 18, because these verses really flow together.

[29 : 25] So we'll read from verse 19. Know this, my beloved brothers, that let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of the man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

Therefore put away all filthiness, and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror, for he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Well, when you read through the epistle of James, you very soon realize that this is a very practical part of Scripture, a very practical letter. Indeed, you could say that, it would be true to say that James is the most practical of all the letters of the New Testament, because it's more or less practiced from beginning to end.

[30 : 47] And James is always to the point. As you read through his letter, you begin to realize, well, here's somebody who takes no prisoners with what he says.

He's very often sharp. He's very often denouncing certain ways of life. And therefore, he confronts us with the truth of God, not in an unloving way, but in a very direct way.

And that's one thing we have to bear in mind as a distinction that's important for ourselves as well at all times. For somebody to be non-compromising in terms of the gospel, in terms of what God himself has set forth in his word, to be non-compromising, to be steadfast in keeping to the word of God, it's not the same thing as to be unloving.

Yes, there are ways in which we can present the gospel in a way that's not tactful, in a way that's harsh, in a way that seems at least to be unloving. But that's not what James is doing.

He's being direct because what he wants to present to his readers is so important in terms of their lives practically. And I hope we come across that way in the preaching of the gospel because God lays that burden upon us as preachers of the gospel to be uncompromising in presenting the truth of the gospel to all who hear it.

[32 : 13] But we never want to be unloving in doing that. Being at times direct as the word is direct. If we're true to the word, then we present the word as directly speaking to us, speaking to us in an uncompromising way.

But we never want to do that unlovingly. We never want to present things harshly or in a way that comes across as if we didn't really care about those we're preaching to.

So if we come across at times as seeming to be harsh or overly direct, I hope it's because we're being true to the word of God and not because we're unfeeling or unloving towards yourselves.

And so here in this passage from chapter 1, verse 21, we read there in verse 21, he finishes that verse by referring to the word of God, the implanted word, he calls it there, using an agricultural term.

Or verse 18 even says that of his own will, God has brought us forth, given birth to us by the word of truth. And he carries on that theme of the word of God, the word of truth that we have, when he says, now but be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.

[33 : 32] And so in verse 19, you could say what he's dealing with is how we hear the word. We have to receive the word in a way that's quick to hear it.

Somebody has said, God has given us two ears and one mouth. Just to follow what James is saying there, quick to hear, slow to speak.

And that's how we find ourselves confronted with God's word, to be quick to hear it, to be anxious to hear it, but to be slow in using our tongues.

He has a chapter that deals with the tongue in chapter three and that's an important passage. But that's taking us away from the main passage that we're looking at today. How we hear the word and then in verses 21 to 25, you could say he's looking at how we live out the word.

That's what we've called our study today. The Bible lived out. The Bible as it's seen in the lives of people practically that want to be true to God, that live out the word of God in their lives.

[34 : 38] And that's really what James is saying. Be doers of the word and not hearers only. And he follows on by giving us an illustration as well of the mirror.

So two things he's looking. He's giving us firstly the imperative. It's really in the form of an imperative or a command. Be doers of the word and not hearers only. And he's following that imperative by the illustrative, by the illustration.

If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror and so on. So following that pattern, let's look at the points he gives us there under these two headings.

First of all, there's this imperative. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Now it's clear from what James is saying there that hearing the word is not unimportant.

And how we hear the word is not unimportant. That's what we said in verse 18, going back to being quick to hear the word. In other words, to hear the word in such a way as realizes is the importance of taking account of what this word is saying to us, seriously reckoning with it and what it's saying, taking it into our minds, thinking it through, applying it to life, to our behavior, to our way of life and all aspects of it.

[36 : 03] We are to hear the word in such a way that really hears it intently, that hears it seriously, that regards it as God speaking to us through the written word that he's given us.

Romans chapter 10, verse 17, you remember that that context has to do with preaching and how God has sent people to preach the word, but he also says that faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God or the word of Christ.

In other words, the faith that we want to have as a feature of our lives by which we live, faith in God, trust in God, how does that come about? Well, it comes about largely, Paul was saying in Romans 10, by the hearing of the gospel, by the hearing of the word preached.

And that has its own implications, which I'm not going to spend time on at the moment to add to that, to amplify that, but the word preached, seeing it's such an important feature of how faith is produced and how faith is fed by God, it's so vital to us to be under the preaching of the word as you are here today, whether you're online or here in person.

We're under the word preached, and the word preached, God has specified, is his way, one of his main ways of dealing with our needs as human beings.

[37 : 28] Preaching is an agency that God has set up. Agency in the sense of a means or a method, but you could say preaching is the agency for person building, for building us up in our person.

So that fits into what James is actually saying in being doers of the word and not hearers only. When he says not hearers only, obviously means but you are still hearers also.

And the hearing comes ahead of the doing. We can only be doers of the word, put it into practice in our lives by first of all hearing it and hearing it in a way that intends the doing of it, in a way that regards it as an important feature of what God's gifts to us are, the preaching of the word being a primary means of faith and of producing faith.

So James has emphasis on being not hearers only, being doers as well as hearers.

In other words, we really have to be careful that we come to be doers of God's word and not be satisfied with simply hearing it. It's a great thing to be hearers of God's word and we've said how important a feature it is in the method that God uses to feed our souls.

[38 : 50] But you know, we could go away from here today, I could be away from here today and congratulate myself that I had preached the word of God, that I had kept to the text that I had chosen or God had laid on my heart to preach from.

You could go away from here today and say, well, I heard the word of God, I really listened while I was there and then go away and congratulate yourself and congratulate myself in doing that. But have I put it into practice?

Have I become the things that God itself in his word tells me I need to be? Have I done the things or have I avoided doing the things that God's word sets before me I should be doing or not be doing?

Remember John in chapter 5 and verses 39 to 40, Jesus speaking there to the crowd there, he's speaking to those people that were at that time gathered around him and he's finding fault with them for one thing especially, he's finding fault with them not for searching the scriptures because that's what they were doing.

You are searching the scriptures, he said, for they are they which testify about me and in them you do think you have eternal life and they weren't wrong in that.

[40 : 06] But you will not come to me that you might have life. See, you can be a hearer of the word, I have never come to Christ.

You can be a hearer of the word today and satisfy yourself that you've heard the word, that you've been attentive to the word, that you've gone to where the word is preached and then you go home unsaved.

And that means you haven't really done the word. You haven't been through to what God is saying to you, to come to Jesus, to repent of sin, to place your trust in Christ, to give your life over to him.

So many ways in which we can be hearers of the word and be hearers only. And then James adds something very significantly to that.

He said, Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Now this is something that James frequently mentions, deceiving yourselves.

[41 : 04] We saw it earlier in the chapter where he mentioned deceiving, being deceived in verse 16. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift, every perfect gift is from above.

And he mentions throughout the letter different times that we can deceive ourselves. And the word that's used here is very interesting. It really means to be led astray by false reasoning.

To be led away by false reasoning. In other words, you can hear the word, you can in a measure accept what it's saying and listen to it in such a way that you're actually careful at the time.

And we'll see that in a minute in the illustration used. But then you don't do what the word is saying. And you know, you can end up very easily persuading yourself, well, I don't really need that part of a Christian character.

I can leave that out. I can be happy with what I've got. I don't really need actually seriously to take communion, to go to the Lord's table, though I know God's word is telling me that.

[42 : 13] But I can just leave that. I'm not really thinking of that as so important. You can deceive yourself so easily. I can deceive myself so easily by persuading ourselves, by false reasoning, that there are certain features of what the Bible describes as a Christian life that are not applicable to me.

That are not applicable or necessary for me to follow out. That's for other folks. Other folks who want to go that far with their religious life or their spiritual life, their Christian life, that's fine, that's for them, but I'm quite happy with them.

I'm a hearer of the word. I go to church. I do that. That'll do for me. Well, James is saying, be careful. You could be deceiving yourself.

Be a doer of the word and not a hearer only, deceiving yourself. People tell us that if you have a stretch of water or an area of water that has a stream flowing into it but no outlet, what happens to that stretch of water or to that area of water?

Something like the Dead Sea, for example. Other areas as well you can see. But what happens to that area of water if there's a lovely, fresh, flowing stream going into it but nothing coming out of it?

[43 : 37] Well, it becomes stagnant. It putrefies. It becomes stinking. And it becomes useless. You know, a human life can be like that.

And if we're through to what James is saying and giving place to his pointedness and to his directness, your life and my life could very easily be that if we're deceiving ourselves that being a hearer of the word is sufficient, if you like, the water of the gospel is going into us.

But there's no outflow and our life becomes like stagnant water if we take the hearer's only approach. So, be a doer of the word and not a hearer only.

That's the imperative that James is beginning with. But he moves on to the illustrative because he wants to illustrate that to give us something by which we can have that greater focus upon what he's saying.

And when he says in the illustration here, he is using the illustration of a mirror. If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, in other words, a hearer only, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

[45 : 00] For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, we'll see what that means in a minute.

It means really the whole of the word of God, not just the law part of it. If he looks into that, he being not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

In other words, he's still focusing on the difference between being a hearer only and somebody who's a hearer and a doer. Now look at the illustration. Somebody who looks at himself in a mirror and then goes away and forgets.

Now the difference, the distinction James is making is not between somebody who just glances casually at himself and somebody who really, in looking into the law of liberty, looks seriously at himself.

Because you'll notice that both use words that show the looking as that looking intently. Here's a man who's looking intently at his natural face in a mirror.

[45 : 59] He doesn't just go out in the morning, have a look at his face in the mirror before he goes, just a casual glance and he says, okay, my hair's okay and I don't need to shave today so off I'll go.

It's not that kind of casual glance he's talking about at all. He looks at himself intently in this mirror. He looks at what his face is like as he sees himself in the mirror but then he goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

In other words, James is telling us that it's so, so possible to look at yourself in the word of God as the mirror by which it tells you about yourself and what you're like and then all too soon be distracted.

Something happens in your life and you actually don't find that image of what the mirror gave you, the word of God gave you, abiding with you so you forget it and you just carry on as things were.

He looks at himself intently and he forgets what he's like. We're so very easily distracted, aren't we, from the image of ourselves that the Bible gives us and we allow so many things to interfere with that image of ourselves as God shows us what we're like and what our needs are and whether we're unsaved still and the Bible tells us you need to repent and to place your trust in Jesus and then something happens as you leave church and interacts and interferes with your thinking and you go the rest of the week and there's all of these distractions and before the next Lord's Day comes you've lost the image of yourself the Bible gave you or you might be a Christian today and you might say well the Bible showed me today what I need to do I need to attend to my life in a way that prays regularly in a way that values company with other Christians I need to attend to my life by regular reading of the word of God so that I do that aspect of it faithfully as well but then throughout the week so many things happen don't they that distract us myself included from all of these aspects of what's essential to a Christian life and a Christian character and he's saying don't be like that otherwise we're like somebody looks intently at himself in a mirror sees there what he sees takes stock of it but then just forgets it and goes on his way as if he'd seen nothing at all and then maybe a good long time after that he realizes that's not good enough

[48 : 37] I need to go back to the mirror but he contrasts that with the one who looks into the perfect law the law of liberty the perfect law the law of liberty is a reference to the whole word of God I'll come to the actual phrase in a minute but just keep the contrast here and the way in which they're compared the person who looks at himself intently but then forgets and here's the person who looks into and it really means to stoop down to look into so it's the same idea of well it's a different word James uses the same idea of looking seriously into the word of God who looks into the perfect law the law of liberty but being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts in other words this person unlike the one who looked in the mirror and then went away and was distracted this person looked into the mirror of God's word saw himself or herself in God's word and then what well they went away and carried that mirror with them they remained in the company of the word of God they let the word of God actually travel with them into the various aspects of the day that they were involved with and I know that's hugely challenging to myself and it's challenging to you as well because I'm sure if you're like me there are times throughout each day when you realize

I haven't really let the word of God influence how I see that or how I spoke or how I related to such and such a person we're all guilty of that but here is the way that James reminds us how important it is to look into the perfect law of liberty the mirror of God's word but actually carry that with us he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer who acts he will be blessed in his doing in other words he perseveres in the company of the word of God that he looked into and saw himself in so if you carry that contrast with you you can see that this is how he puts it into practice now that means that we today need to give not just a hearing to this word of God but to be hearing in such a way that says I must let this word remain with me throughout this week

I've begun this week in a good way I've been in church I've heard the word of God I've heard it preached I've been under the word by which faith comes so now I must attend every day to this that I keep that word in my company and keep company with it that I'm not a forgetful person who just looked on one occasion and then forget for the rest of the week I must carry it with me I must be in its companionship it must be my constant companion must feed my mind my thinking my reactions my speech that's what we need to put to ourselves today friends isn't it because we want to be productive fruitful Christians we want to be people who have some sort of impact or influence in the society in which we live we will not do that by being hearers only of the word of God we must be hearers and doers some people think that this passage really has to do with us practically being as fully involved as possible with things like the church's outreach evangelism evangelistic activities whatever they might be and of course that's included in it absolutely but you mustn't think that being a doer of the word is just those sort of things where you're seen practically to be active Christians to be a doer of the word means you pray faithfully it means you read your Bible faithfully it means you take your relationships faithfully it means every single thing of a practical

Christian life that you put into action as a doing of the word of God so every aspect of life privately relationships publicly whatever they are they have to be by the they have to be in a way that's fed by the word of God so become doers of the word of God and being faithful to God involves being a doer of the word of God but let's look at why he calls this the perfect law the law of liberty whoever looks into the perfect law the law of liberty and perseveres well you carry the imagery with you of the word of God being a mirror in which you see yourself and you're looking into it into peering into it as he says in verse 25 looking into it in terms of stooping down humbling yourself to say this word is the word that must direct my mind not the other way about and as you do that it is the perfect law the law of liberty sometimes we think that God's law is at odds with the gospel sometimes we think that God's law is something very rigid and it is something of course which is itself set by God in which the character of God is set forth and that remains the case whatever we make of it but

James is actually here describing the whole of scripture the whole of the word of God and describing it as the law of liberty why does he do that how can he link the idea of law with liberty or with freedom because sometimes the Bible does speak about the works of the law being bondage if we're trying to please God by keeping the law ourselves instead of turning to Jesus and accepting Jesus as one who kept the law perfectly then we're in the position of legalism and trying to do something ourselves which has been done for us in Jesus that's not the idea that's behind this at all the law the perfect law the law of liberty let me just think about Israel for a moment as they came out of Egypt came through the wilderness and a part of the journey and then they arrived at Mount Sinai well what happened at Mount Sinai why was Mount Sinai so important to them and so much a feature of their life afterwards because what happened at

[55 : 23] Mount Sinai was that God gave them his law he gave them not just the Ten Commandments but other laws as well but the Ten Commandments especially he gave them that as their moral code as the way by which their life was to be directed and their lifestyle was to be directed he gave them that law as the lifestyle required by God was set forth in it but who were they what was their position on Mount Sinai he didn't bring them to Mount Sinai so as to say if you keep this law then I'll treat you as deserving of my redemption he had already redeemed them they had come out of Egypt by the power of God they were God's redeemed covenant people in that sense and they had come out of that bondage of Egypt the slavery of Egypt they had been kept in that for many years hundreds of years and here they were released by God's power by God's grace by God's love from that bondage of Egypt and here they were as a redeemed freed people given the law of God for their direction that's really what the Christian life is about

God has released you has given you liberty from sin from the guilt of sin from the grip of Satan and he's brought you to present you with his word as your safeguard if you like as your directions for life and as he's done that you come to this word of God even the parts of it that are actually laws and you don't regard them as being burdensome as somehow or other being inappropriate for a Christian life you rejoice that they keep you safe that they tell you what God is like as well as other aspects of his word let me just read from one of the Psalms Psalm 119 which is all about the word of God sometimes called statutes testimonies precepts word but this is what he says in verse 97 oh how

I love your law it is my meditation all the day your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies for it is ever with me verse 103 have a similar emphasis there how sweet are your words to my taste sweeter than honey to my mouth through your precepts I get understanding therefore I hate every false way and verse 162 just picking up some verses from the whole Psalm here but 162 I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your law seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules great peace have those who love your law nothing can make them stumble see how important how precious how central how foundational how liberating if you like the word of God the law of God as he calls it was to him that's why he relished it that's why he wanted to live it out to be a doer of that law of that word and not a hearer only and this is really what

James is setting before us today the one who looks into the perfect law the law of liberty we're taking the whole of scripture and saying this is God's regulating word for us and it's not burdensome though it places certain restrictions on us whoever looks into the law of liberty and perseveres who remains in its company being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts he will be blessed in his doing and when James' companion John wrote his small but important third letter this is what he said in verse four I have no greater joy and to hear that my children walk in the truth in the ways of truth because friends that's what this word is it is

God's truth it's God's infallible truth God's authoritative truth and it's in his kindness that he has given it to us we are not to be hearers only though we are to be intent hearers we are to be doers of the word and not hearers only we are to let the word be our constant companion so that by living fruitful lives and this is James O'er writing concern as it is with all epistles we will bring glory and honour and praise to our God may these words be blessed to us we're going to conclude now by singing once again to God's praise in Psalm 119 this time it's from the Scottish Psalter on page 167 verses beginning at 161 and that's section 4 verses to tune

[61 : 17] Rockingham though rulers hound me without cause my heart fears nothing but your word for in your promise I rejoice like one who finds great spoil O Lord all false who die a poor and hate with all my heart I love your law I praise you seven times a day for your commands I hold in all so these four verses from verse 161 on page 167 though rulers hound me without cause for you for you that have me with that thoughts my heart fears nothing but your word for in your promise I rejoice like one who finds this spoil

O Lord out What Ham I am old and late, with all my heart I love you all.

I praise you seven times a day, for your commands I hold in all.

If he stands for those who love her, they will not stumble in the way.

I pray for you, salvation Lord, and you commands I will obey.

[63 : 42] I will, old Savior's statue's heart, my love for them is great and true.

Through the lost and peace, I obey, for all my ways I hold to you.

I'll go to the main door after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen.