

Walking in the Word
James 1:22-25

James is concerned about how we live under pressure. His contention is that, like his readers, we also live under various but constant pressures. Our pressures may not be exactly like those of James' audience, but we all live under certain pressures that are particular to us.

James is the half-brother of Jesus and the first elder at the church in Jerusalem. He's writing to Jewish Christians who are dispersed throughout the world, encouraging them to display authentic Christianity.

In the winter, most trees look dead. It's not until Spring that we know which ones are alive and which are dead. In the same way, it's not until we are suffering; that we are squeezed, that we know if our faith is alive. James wants us to have a living, an authentic faith.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ 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.

First: - Principle - Submit to the Word. 22

19 – *Know this...take note.* Wake up and pay attention. This is important because to be human is to confess we don't know everything.

Why? Because we are prone to:

- 19 – anger
- 20 – sin
- 22 – ignoring reality
- 23 – forgetfulness
- 26 – opinionated
- 27 – self-centeredness

22 – *Be doers of the word, and not hearers only...*

God wrote the source code of our lives. James' perspective is that we are only submitted to the word if we are 'doing' it.

Until we submit to the Word, we are submitting to self, as James has demonstrated, is insufficient to live healthily and possess healthy relationships.

Think about living life in your own wisdom. It's common to pick and choose what we want to live by from various sources. But in the end, that's me getting the last word. I want the all other

wisdom to serve me as a buffet so that in the end I can choose my own soul's playlist. In the end, we are all creating our own moral code.

If that's the truth, that there is no truth. Why would you choose your own code of ethics instead of someone else's? How do you trust anyone's moral list? The person who rejects the Bible's truth constructs his or her own. But what makes your opinion more valid than anyone else's...more valuable than the Bible's perspective on life?

Amos 8:11-12 - *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD,
 "when I will send a famine on the land—
 not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
 but of hearing the words of the LORD.
¹² They shall wander from sea to sea,
 and from north to east;
 they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD,
 but they shall not find it.*

Tolerance for all life codes seems easier because you don't have to take a stand but in the long run, it isn't easiest and certainly isn't best. And, in reality, no one lives like that. Everyone makes daily judgement about what they think is right or wrong.

*"Without God, certainty is even harder to come by. Who am I to say what is right or wrong?
 A little divine back-up would be useful. If only I could find a scintilla of faith "*
 Antonio Senior in the London Times

What's he saying? If only something could fill the wisdom gap between I know what ought to be and what is, about me and the world.

James says, "Scripture is it."

"Okay, but how do I get it to work for me?" That's the next point –

Second: Power - Remember the Word.

The problem is not that we don't hear the Bible, it's that we don't submit to it. We don't obey it.

James 2:19 - *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!*

The problem is that we don't obey it.

Do the Word!

Too many of us are giving money to the gym but never working out. Too many of us are attending church but never engaging with the word. James' contention is that it isn't even enough to read the Bible. You have to do it.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ 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.

Mirrors in James' day weren't plentiful. And they weren't glass but polished brass which presented a distorted image. To see the real you, you had to spend time really looking at yourself. And then you had to remember what you looked like in order to fix what was wrong.

Amnesia is deadly to your Christianity.

James says to remember the Word so that you can do what it says.

ILL – Read the Bible today – “*Be quick to hear and slow to speak, slow to anger...*”. If you forget that, you'll submit to some other wisdom and vs 27 – “stain yourself.”

“The most important question we ask of [a] text is, “What can I obey?”

Eugene Peterson

Shaping your Christian life comes from doing the Word.

ILL – You can know that a chair will hold you up but only when you sit on it can you experience the chair. Only when you exercise faith in the Bible does it become your nature to do so under pressure.

Edward Rochester is married to an insane woman and wants Jane to be his mistress. He tells her that if she doesn't allow him to care for her, no one will. She is in ‘madly’ in love with Rochester but responds,

“I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad — as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth — so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane — quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.”

- Jane in *Jane Eyre*

“Why should I trust myself in my moment of instability?” The Scripture has a worth that is invaluable to me only if I remember its truths in the moment of sorrow or temptation.

Third: Person - Trust the Word

²⁵ 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.

We trust those we know love us. We are about to take part in the Lord's Table, which is a memorial of God's love to us in Jesus.

ILL – Like a child holding onto an adult's arm in traffic. It may seem to restrict the child's freedom but it in fact insures it because at the other end of that arm is love.

Christianity is costly, and it is wholly counter-cultural. Why should you do it? What is your motivation? The cross.

V 21 – *“receive with meekness the implanted word”* (logos) = “word” in John 1 – Jesus is the word.

Jesus is the model of what he is asking you to do.

Jesus is the incarnated word. When the world was saying, *“Save yourself. You first. Others second,”* Jesus planted his foot in the Father's word to him. He trusted the Father and is now asking you to trust him.

When God tells you how to spend your money, or what to do with your body, you know that at the other end of that word is love.

That's why what we are doing this morning is so important. We are remembering what the incarnated Word, Jesus, did for us.

Communion

Community Groups:

- 1 – Read the text with the class.
- 2 – James encourages us to do what and not do what?
- 3 – What is the difference?
- 4 – What does James compare a person to who only hears the word?
- 5 – What is the key to ‘doing’ the word? Remembering it!
- 6 – Why are we prone to forget the Word?
 - a) We aren’t familiar with it
 - b) We haven’t memorized it
 - c) It’s not our practice to use it
- 7 – Can you think of biblical examples of people who forgot the Word?
 - a) Abraham forgot God’s promise and took matters into his own hands
 - b) Israel forgot God’s word in the Promised Land and lived their own way
 - c) The disciples forgot Jesus’ word about the resurrection
- 7 – How could a person ‘persevere’ in the Word?
- 8 – Contrast “forgetting” with “persevering” in the Word?
- 9 – Offer examples of how you remember God’s Word.
- 10 – What does Jane mean when she says *“Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be.”*
- 11 – How can you make the Bible a “preconceived opinion, forgone determination” to direct your life in a time when you are under pressure or suffering?
- 12 – Recall a time when you obeyed God’s Word and your life was ‘blessed’ as a result.