

James 1:22-25 – April 3, 2022
Why It's Easier Said Than Done
J.D. Farag

So we're in James, verse-by-verse we're going through this epistle, and today's text is going to be Chapter 1 beginning in verse 22 and Lord willing, we're going to make it through to verse 25. So for those of you that are here, if you're able, I will ask you to stand, you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is just fine. You can still follow along.

James, by the Holy Spirit now, verse 22 writes, **"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it, not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it, they will be blessed in what they do."

Let's pray, if you would please join with me; we'll ask God's blessing on our understanding. Father in Heaven, thank You so much for Your Word and this portion that we have here before us today in Your Word. Lord, this is a passage I'm sure familiar to most and rightfully so.

There's something here that You want us to hear and not only hear but do, so that we can be numbered amongst those of whom it can be said, they are not merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word.

Lord, would You in the time that we have together today in Your Word, bless it, speak to us in it, keep any and all distractions away so that our minds don't wander from it because we don't want to miss anything that You have for us.

So get our attention, Lord. That's not my job, that's the Holy Spirit's. And then once you have our attention, Lord, keep it. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

You can be seated, thank you. So I want to talk with you today about that well-known idiom, you've heard it said, "Easier said than done."

Well, what I want to talk about is this idiom, "Easier said than done" as it relates to being a doer of God's Word and the reason is, is that the text before us today, and this is what we're beginning to love about James as we get to know him, true to form, by the Holy Spirit he is

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hitting this head on concerning being merely only a hearer of God's Word, and quite an interesting imagery here and description and example and comparison he gives to the one who is only a hearer of God's Word.

What I want to do today is talk about why it is - that it's so much easier, isn't it, to just be a hearer of God's Word?

I heard the Word.

That's great.

What did you do?

Oh, now you are getting up by my grill.

No, I'm not; James is, and he needs to, and in so doing is going to provide us with no less than three reasons as to why it is that it is infinitely easier to just hear the Word of God and not do what it says.

And the first one is in verse 22. And by the way, spoiler alert, James is going to talk more about this throughout this epistle. In fact, I think we're going to see it, Lord willing, next week, self-deception. He brings it up here right out of the chute. It's the proverbial nail on the head, saying that we deceive ourselves merely listening to the Word.

We need to talk about this because do you know what self-deception or deceiving ourselves actually means?

Get this: Not only do we lie to ourselves; we actually believe our own lies. How about that?

Oh, come on, Pastor, not me.

Really?

Oh, we are good at it. Self-deception, we deceive ourselves and in the context, and this - I think you would agree, should send chills up and down our spiritual spines by virtue of the fact that we actually all, all of us, myself included, have the propensity to not only lie to ourselves but to believe our own lies.

Here's one of them. I'm good.

What you mean?

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I went to church today.

Wow!

I think about what Jesus said, You tremble at the Word of God? Well, so do the demons. Have a nice afternoon. That means absolutely nothing.

See, here's the problem: We believe that, hey, I heard the Word so I'm good. That's self-deception. We deceive ourselves into thinking that, Oh, that's enough. And here's what that looks like in our lives, and I always include myself. Hey, - of course I'm a pastor so maybe this doesn't quite apply.

Hey, I went to church.

Wow!

Hey, get this, I even tithed. I don't want to know about that but - Oh, I'm not worthy, right?

You have deceived yourself into thinking that just because you heard the Word, it's all good. And nothing could be further from the truth. It's kind of like this. I always think about it in the context of prayer and I'm always very careful when it comes to prayer.

I never like to be - worship and prayer be unnecessarily critical, but this is a good critique. You know when somebody approaches you and they'll say something to you along the lines of, well, I prayed about it.

And?

In other words, what was God's response?

In other words, we think that, Hey, it's good because I prayed about it.

What did God say?

I pray - I'll speak for myself on this one - I prayed about sending you this e-mail. (Sighing) In other words, it's like authenticating and validating that which they're going to say solely on the basis of hey, I prayed about it.

Hey, I read that passage.

And what was God's response?

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How about this? Now just think this through with me. You know I really sought the Lord and prayed about this, and the Lord really impressed upon my heart and ministered to me this.

Oh, now we're talking because now there is an interaction. It's been said that prayer - and the teaching today isn't on prayer, but I think it applies. It's been said that prayer is not a monologue but a dialogue. And it applies, and here's how I get there because when we pray, God will respond because we pray and then He'll have something to say.

Well, how is He going to say it?

He's going to say it in and through His Word.

So I hear what God says and I leave it there and I fancy myself as it's all good. I heard the Word. Oh, Pastor, that was a great sermon.

I love what the late Howard Hendricks, who's now with the Lord called it. He called it the glorification of the worm ceremony. You know after church, Oh, Pastor, that was such an amazing word. Glorification of the worm.

Wait, so you heard the Word, but... go ahead... what did God minister to you? You heard it, but what are you going to do about it?

Well, that's our next one.

So not only do we deceive ourselves, but so too do we admire ourselves. You're going to have to forgive me in advance for the way that I'm going to take and tackle these two verses because truth be known, we admire ourselves too much and in so doing we give ourselves a pass of sorts. When we see ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, which is what James is saying here, and we look at ourselves - and I know this is going to date me and again, you'll forgive me, but it kind of reminds me of - remember that sitcom 'Happy Days,' the Fonz?

He goes, "Ayy!"

We do that with God's Word! I mean, we look at ourselves and we're like hey, I'm good, I don't need to change anything. Are you kidding me?

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You got hair where it shouldn't be, hair where it used to be, hair that shouldn't be. You can fill in the blanks, I won't get too graphic with that explanation. But we're shown us as God sees us in the mirror of God's Word.

Because if you think about it, isn't this true?

I mean, it's a mirror. Let's start with The Ten Commandments. I'm seeing me. I broke every single one of them. It's a mirror, it shows me: me, as God sees me.

But see, I don't see myself like that. I think I look pretty good; you know?

Just kind of suck it in a little bit and I'm good. And you don't do [do] anything about that which you have just seen. Why?

Why is it so easy to walk away from the mirror of God's Word?

Because we fancy ourselves and think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and we give ourselves a pass under the banner of self-deception and self-admiration. It's all about self. You know when you are in the Proverbs - you probably do this, I know I'm just is prone to do this.

You know those contrasting Proverbs, usually in the teens, that might be a prophetic thing right there. The teens, chapters 13 on, you have the contrasting Proverbs, you know, the righteous do this, but the wicked do this.

You're like yeah, them wicked people!

[Laughter]

Oh, you fancy yourself as the righteous. No, you are the wicked. Are you looking at the same mirror that I'm looking at?

You put that mirror up to me and - let's take it into the physical and personal. What do you do when you look at yourself in the mirror in the morning?

I winced and asked the Lord to come quickly. What do you do when you see yourself in the mirror? Don't you start combing and shaving and brushing and washing and all of the above? Why do you do that?

Because you're looking at yourself going, Oh, I look like that?

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Yeah, it's bad. And as you get older, it's worse.

Anyway, I think you get the point, right?

So in the physical sense, you see yourself in the mirror in your true condition and you do something about it. And what James is saying here is that we do err greatly in the spiritual sense when we look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word and we just walk away, and we don't do anything about it.

No, you better do something about that because you're just now a hearer of God's Word and not a doer of God's Word. You better do something about what you've just seen in the mirror of God's Word.

See and we don't like that because we always want to shed ourselves in a most favorable light. It's just the sin nature, it's the Adamic nature within us and this side of the rapture and glory, we're always going to be dealing with the flesh, the Devil, the world; the big three, as I will call them.

But there's just in our flesh - and the Apostle Paul, I love how he said it, and it is really better understood in different translations when he says, "**That I know that in me there dwells no good thing that is in my flesh.**" I like how another translation, more of a paraphrase renders it, "I am rotten through and through." I am a dirty, rotten, stinking, sinner.

And that's what God's Word shows me. It shows me: me.

And now I better do something about it. Because if I just walk away from that mirror and don't do anything, well, it's not just that I admire myself or think too highly of myself, I've actually deceived myself and this leads to our third one, which is that we excuse ourselves.

Stay with me on this. Here, James emphasizes the paramount importance, and don't miss this, of intently and continually doing the examining and the correcting of ourselves. We're looking into the mirror of God's perfect law, intently looking, kind of like what you do every morning. I mean you're looking at yourself intently.

And listen, with all due respect to the women, you know, we don't have to deal with makeup. I should have never started down this road. But, you know, you - some of you - well, I better be very careful here.

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How focused are you on -- I mean it's an art, it's like a science. You know the right lighting and the color, and you have to really look intently, and you know maybe not too much and maybe more over here. Am I taking this too far?

[Laughter] I'll let the Holy Spirit take it from there. Why don't we do that with the spiritual?

It's of such importance that if we would, but intently and continually do what needs to be done, this because we've now seen ourselves as God sees us in our true condition, it's then that, and this can be so easily missed at first read, we'll be blessed. Oh, how quickly we read over that, do not give attention to that. But what James is saying here is that if we would but intently examine, correct, and do what needs to be done when we look intently into the perfect mirror of God's Word, you know what's on the end of that?

A blessed life. We pray -- God, bless me. God's like, I can't because you're not doing what I told you to do. It's not that I don't want to bless you; I can't bless your life. If you would but do what I tell you to do. And never imagine that God says, do this because I'm God and I said so! And in the day that thou-est dost not do-est this, thou shalt surely die! No, it's more like this. You'll forgive the dramatic illustration, but it's more like this. I love you so much and so much that I can't stand it when you needlessly and unnecessarily suffer all because you would not do what I told you to do. You know, we say things like well, you know I have your best interest at heart. I do this because I love you. We do that as parents, right?

When we discipline our children, they always say, I wish you would love me less if you're doing this because you love me. How about this one?

This is going to hurt me a lot more than it's going to hurt you.

Well, then why - Let's just spare us both the hurt; let's just skip the whole thing.

I think about our Heavenly Father in much the same way. It's not that God has problems obviously, but the problem that God has is that we're the problem.

I mean, He wants to spare us. He wants to direct us. He wants to correct us. And so He wants to keep us from going down this path that will surely lead to unnecessary suffering, as we suffer the consequences of our unwillingness to do what God said to do.

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See, here's God saying, listen, I know the end from the beginning. And I love you so much, and I want to tell you, you need to do this. I have your best interest at heart like no other. You want a blessed life?

Do this and your life will be blessed. We basically untie the hands of God's blessing on our lives that we have heretofore tied up with the ropes of our unwillingness to be doers of God's Word.

Let's take this a step further because I'm going to have you go to Matthew 7 here in a moment. But maybe to preface it, to be a doer of God's Word is to actually take the Word that's heard and put it into practice, apply it to our lives.

I mean, it's not really complicated. I think we complicate it, but it's not complicated. So God wants to bless us. We understand that and we agree with that, right?

God's at the ready, He wants to bless us, but there these preconditions. I want to bless you, but you need to be a doer of the Word, not merely a hearer. Put it into practice, apply it to your life. It's for your own good. How about that one?

That's another one, right? It's for your own good.

It is? Sure don't feel good.

[Laughter]

Well, Matthew 7, I want to begin reading in verse 24, I'd encourage you to join me there. I mean this is a powerful parable and principle and so applicable. Jesus is drawing this stark contrast between two builders and apparently these builders have a lot in common. The only thing that differentiated them was the foundation upon which they chose to build their house.

Now in verse 24, Jesus says, "**Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and [that's a big "and"] puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; [Does that sound like your week last week?] yet it did not fall, [Why?] because it had its foundation on the rock.**"

Now here comes the contrast.

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"But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house [on Kailua Beach] on the sand.

[Laughter]

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Great was the fall. Again the only thing that differentiated these two builders in this parable was the foundation upon which they built their houses.

Did you notice something about what they had in common here?

They both heard the Word. They both apparently went to the same church I guess because they heard the Word. One put them into practice and the other did not. The one who put the word he heard into practice and applied it was a doer of the Word.

Hey, when the storm -- Oh, here's another keyword "when " the storm came, and the storms come. It is not if, it is when, and how soon and how bad and how often.

When the one who put the word he heard into practice and applied it to his life and was a doer of the word, that storm, you can crash up against my house all you want.

You can blow that wind, hurricane force, all you want. You can flood that place, that house with all the rain you want. It ain't going anywhere because it's on the solid rock foundation built on the doing of God's Word.

Same storm because it must have been if they went to the same church, they must have built their houses close in proximity to each other in the same town.

Are we okay with that?

Come on, just indulge me. It's my illustration.

Okay, so they both apparently built their houses at the same time, close in proximity to each other. This guy, oh, he chooses not -- this is deliberate -- there's no excuse here. He could have done what the other builder did and put the words into practice, applied it to his life like the other builder, but he didn't.

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And so instead, his house - same storm, by the way. And the weather reports were very threatening ahead of time, accurate for a change. It really did come. The warning was there and when that thing hit, man, that house came crashing down.

Well, that's our lives. That's your life and my life. That's our Christian lives. You can come to a church service like this and I'm so glad you did. You can hear the Word and then you can leave this church today and off you go, and you do nothing.

What you don't know is around the corner the storm's going to hit. Maybe it's a phone call, a diagnosis, an e-mail, even. And your life had better be built upon the solid rock foundation of God's Word as a doer of His Word, putting His Word into practice, or else you're going down.

I mean, I don't know how else to describe it or paint this picture. I mean, I think about when many years ago we lived on the mainland, and I've shared this example before. It's really a great example.

You know, in Oregon, Cannon Beach, Oregon, they have this huge rock it's called Haystack Rock and depending on the tide, it's just right there. You know, you're on the beach and depending on the tide, this rock is just right out there. And sometimes the waters get a little bit rough.

I've been there. My wife and I used to go there. They have a Christian conference center there and we would stay there, and oh, just loved going to the beach.

On one particular day I took notice of the birds that were on this rock. And I mean, they're just singing - they weren't myna birds either which in and of itself, this was the Lord, I knew it was the Lord. Some of you know I have an issue with myna birds. I'm pretty sure they are not going to be in Heaven, but that's my problem.

So these birds were just on that rock and they're singing to their Creator, praising God, oblivious to the waves crashing in below them. Why?

Because they are on the rock. And you can have whatever storm waves, whatever you want crashing up against that rock. That rock ain't moving and neither are those birds on that rock because it's solid.

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You know I hesitated to share this, but I think maybe it's the Lord, and I will. So here goes.

You know when my wife and I experienced the death of our daughter, we were told, we were given the statistics, I forget what it is, 90-something percent of couples who experience the death of a child end up in a divorce.

That's always perky isn't it, you know share with somebody? Wow! You know that 98% of couples end up in divorce?

Thank you so much, brother, sister, thanks for the encouragement.

But no, statistically, I guess the grieving and the pain, maybe even the blaming is so intense that couples just don't stay together. I actually knew on the mainland of a couple like that.

So we're given the statistics and what came about was that not only did it not drive us apart, it actually brought us closer together. And the reason it did is because we were on the rock, man.

Very interesting, we had just started the church. And we had just rented - this is in 2005 - the SDA building that we would end up renting for 12 years before God miraculously got us this place. And it was just a very small church. Some of you were there. You'll remember this.

But it stayed small, and you know, I just kept my hands to the plow. Of course I had my tent-making ministry doing business, you know, to pay the bills because the church was just too small at the time.

And we found out we were pregnant, and then we learned in the pregnancy that Noelle our daughter had what they call Trisomy 18.

And Trisomy 18, the medical community refers to it as "incompatible with life." So our birth plan was actually a funeral plan as well because we didn't know.

Well, she was born, and she was resuscitated, and we got her for four months and six days, which I look back on that, that was the Lord. But here's the thing: That small, precious fellowship of believers at the time was watching us because that's a storm.

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And here's the thing, and I had someone tell me this and it was a really good word actually. He told me, he said, you know, you have to make sure you're to come to Hawaii and start a church. I mean, think about it, right?

Here am I, Lord, send me. You know, Hawaii, somebody's got to do it.

[Laughter]

And that's actually, sadly, kind of the mindset. And what happened as a result of that is a lot of these guys came from the mainland, started a church, found out how hard it is and ended up bailing and going back to the mainland after a couple of years, and it left a really bad taste in people's mouths.

And I couldn't figure out because the first church I started on the mainland - I'm just sharing my heart with you; I hope you don't mind.

The first church I started on the mainland grew too big too fast I remember when we came here, I said, Lord, grow the church small. Boy, did He! We have the biggest small church in the world, I think, and the smallest big church. But it grew too big too fast.

And so the church was not growing, and I thought, wow, the Lord really heard that prayer because this thing is still small.

The still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. The word is "still." That's the one that really got me, it's "still" small, still.

So it wasn't growing, not like the mainland, my goodness. And I couldn't understand why. I mean I really wasn't doing anything differently. I was still teaching the word verse-by-verse.

And then after Noelle died, everybody thought oh, he's out of here, he's out of here. I mean, he's going to go back just like all the others. And I didn't. It was kind of like you're stuck with me. You're not getting rid of me that easy.

But when they saw that I was not moved, that it was a solid rock commitment, and that I wasn't going anywhere, even after that, that's when they committed. They were watching. I say they; some of you, again, were watching to see, is he going to be just like all the rest?

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When the storm comes - it didn't help that we left the least expensive state in the United States and came to the most expensive state in the United States to start a church. But when that bill comes in or that storm hits and you're not moved, oh!

And then from that point, as God as my witness, I can trace the growth of this, God's church, from that point on.

One last thing here and we'll bring it in for a close. Many years ago I remember a pastor saying this at a pastors conference and it really stuck with me. He said, the people in the church that your privileged to pastor, and I'm am so privileged to be the Pastor of this church, they need to see the supernatural hand of God's mighty miracles.

I thought about it, and I thought, oh, wow! And it really stuck with me. So this small, precious fellowship at that time, not only are they watching that, they watched to see what God was going to do after that.

Well, 45 days after Noelle went to be with Jesus, we conceived again. We, like I was a part of it, like I can conceive. I mean, I know it looks like I did. Miraculously, my wife comes to me and says, you know I want another daughter, not to replace Noelle, but to heal our broken hearts over Noelle.

And you have to understand our history. I don't want to go into it, but we were told we could not have children. They said, you have what is called unexplained infertility which means basically, your infertility is unexplained. I know it is deeply profound.

For 10 years we could not have children. We even tried to adopt. And I made a vow to God that if He would give me a biological son, I would sell my business and serve Him all the days of my life. And God did that.

But it was so hard for us. We lost babies in the womb prior to our first born son. And then we would have another son in that process, I don't want to get to detailed, but an ectopic pregnancy, lost another baby.

So now we're down to one tube; but nothings too hard for the Lord. So she says I want another daughter. So okay, we'll get right on that. I felt like Sarah when she laughs at Abraham. It's okay, honey, we're going to get through this.

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And sure enough we conceived. And God said I'm going to give you another girl and she's going to be beautiful and smart and healthy; that was a biggie. And she is - of course my wife prayed that she would be given this voice of an angel to sing. And my daughter Sabia who is 15 years old now is a testimony to that supernatural, miraculous hand of God. He did a miracle, an absolute miracle.

So let's bring it in for a close. I'll have Kaponu come up at this time, we'll have you stand up at this time. The take away I suppose for today is, God wants to bless your life. Just do it; be a doer of God's Word so He can.

Put His Words to practice. Take Him at His Word.

How about that? God has given you His Word.

You know when you say to somebody, I give you my word. Okay. But when God says, I give you My Word, that's it, man. He's given you His Word. That's His Word. He's not going to go back on it. Take Him at His Word.

I don't like to borrow secular phrases, but sometimes that's the way to connect. But it's almost like a dare, daring, to have the audacity to dare to trust God to do something just so exceedingly, abundantly above and beyond anything you could have ever possibly imagined. God loves to do miracles and God is a God of miracles.

He wants to bless your life and He wants you to be a doer of His Word so He can. And then when you do, watch out, man. Behold the salvation of the Lord and see what He's going to do. Let's pray.

Father in Heaven, I just - I've done my best so now the Holy Spirit's going to have to do the rest on this one.

Lord, I pray that You would take now this word we've heard to the next level because absent the power of the Holy Spirit, this has all been just a waste of time. I mean, the last thing we need is another sermon. The last thing I need is to deliver another sermon.

No, it's time to do something and to put it into practice because I don't think there's a one of us here that doesn't want, when that storm hits, maybe for some, it's already hit.

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Lord, I pray that we would be doers who put Your Word into practice, so we stand steadfast and are blessed. Thank You, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.