

Law of Freedom

11-9-25

James 1:22 (ESV)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving yourselves.

This verse as others in James can be challenging. But if we stand on the solid foundation that we are forgiven and eternally secure through Jesus, this verse and the other challenging verses in James can be much easier to understand. In light of this, Sunday after Sunday we examine the wonderful, majestic Word of God and hopefully come away encouraged. But here, James tells us that when there is not any evidence of what we believe, we do not possess any faith. James totally agrees that we are saved by faith alone, but he is also saying that like Abraham, the man of faith, we should possess some evidence of our faith.

Heb.11:8 (NASV) NO/OH

By faith Abraham, when he was called, went.

James is saying that enjoying a good sermon or reading the Bible is useless and even self-deception when this practice doesn't result in accompanying application.

Throughout the teaching of James he reinforces, “Put into practice what you profess to believe.”

James 1:23–24 (ESV)

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.

James uses the illustration of a man who looks at his face in a mirror and then goes away forgetting what he saw. A man looks in the mirror and sees he needs to shave, then walks away forgetting what he saw and goes to the party without shaving. Likewise, a man after hearing the Word knows what God expects of him but goes away forgetting what he heard. *The purpose of listening to truth is to act upon it.* But for this man it is out of sight, out of mind. *Theoretical knowledge of spiritual truth is never commended in Scripture. In fact, it is condemned. For the Christian, knowledge is inseparably tied to experience.* A believer is expected to act on what he hears. Being obedient will not only accomplish what God desires, but the believer will also gain additional Biblical knowledge by experience.

James 1:25 (ESV)

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

***ESV uses liberty, the NIV freedom. Same literal Greek mostly translated as freedom. The whole context of this section concerns a believer intently looking into (literally) “the perfect law, the law of freedom.” The use of the word “law” reveals the Jewish orientation of the early believers and requires some attention. James qualifies the word, Law, to make sure his readers understand the full revelation of God. He describes this law as “perfect” and as characterized by “freedom”. The word law is not merely the OT law, or a legalistic system for earning salvation by good works. James calls it the “PERFECT LAW,” he means the sum total of God’s revealed truth, culminating in the revelation of Christ and the redemption of man. Also, James calls it the “LAW OF FREEDOM”. It is not enforced by external compulsion. Instead, it is freely accepted, and people are empowered from within by the Holy Spirit as promised by the OT.**

When we look intently into the perfect and full revelation of God and apply what we hear, God makes a promise, “We will be blessed in what we do.”

Summary of how we receive this blessing:

- 1. We “look intently” into God’s Word.**
- 2. We “persevere” in God’s Word.**
- 3. We “do not forget” what we have heard.**
- 4. We “act” on what we hear.**

This is not promised to a person who reads a lot of books or goes to a lot of conferences. This is only promised to a person who intently looks into “THE PERFECT LAW OF FREEDOM”.

This section ends with evidences of hearing in verses 26-27: bridle our tongue, visit orphans and widows, keep oneself unstained from the world. These activities are not meant to be a complete list. They are given to emphasize the type of action our hearing should produce. James 2:8 shows the clearest evidence of a person looking into the PERFECT LAW OF FREEDOM and acting on what he hears.

James 2:8 (ESV)

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

The Royal Law of Love is the Perfect Law of Freedom.

John 3:16 (ESV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.