

# James 1:22-25

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[0:00] In our study, I'm going to reference some charts. If you have a bulletin already in your hands, you'll see these already and probably have already thought, what in the world are these?

If you don't have one in your hand right now, I think you'll be benefited by having one in your hand. This will not magically appear on the screen over my left shoulder. So if you don't have a bulletin and you'd like one, Adam's got a stack of them in the back and he'd be glad to put one in your hand right now.

If you'll raise your hand, he will run around the room and make this happen. Here's some hands. Okay, very good, Adam. Keep him high for him so he can see him. Don't do a little half elbow hand. Do a full hand. Let him get around the room and get him to you.

I believe these will be helpful to you. I'll do my best to talk about them in such a way that you may not need them, but just in case. As those are coming around, let me remind you, in last week's text, we were exhorted by James to be quick to hear in verse 19.

And I made the specific case to you that James is telling us to be quick to hear God's word. There's a broader application to this idea of being quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger.

[1:10] But specifically, he's talking about being quick to hear God's word as he goes on in verse 20 to exhort us to receive with meekness the implanted word.

Two weeks ago, in celebration of Reformation Day, we considered 2 Peter 1, verse 16 through chapter 2 and verse 3, and the need for us always to be reforming by God's word.

To come back to it again and again and again. Hold up our lives and the function of our church, the light of God's word. Peter writes in verse 19 of 2 Peter chapter 1, And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

So, we will do well to hear God's word and to be transformed by God's word has been the theme that's been kind of picked up over the last couple of weeks.

And today's text continues this line of reasoning. So, before I read James chapter 1, beginning in verse 22 and following, I remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us.

[2:34] It has bearing on us today, sitting in this room. It was written for his glory and for our good. And so, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

James chapter 1, beginning in verse 22. 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 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.

There are times when we come to a text in God's word and I want to read it and I just want to go, okay, let me read it one more time for you and we'll be done.

[3:46] And initially, this is kind of the impulse for me of a text like this, right? Don't just be a hearer, be a doer. Everybody got it? And to walk away from it.

But there's a lot to consider and I think there's especially a lot to consider in our age about what a text like this means for the church. So we are going to study it.

We're going to keep it open and we're going to continue to look at it over the next half hour or so. James here in this text juxtaposes two types of people.

And notice that they are both hearers of the word. So they're within the category of those who are hearing the word. But only one is obedient to the word.

Let's consider this text with a very simple outline. Number one, the way of the deceived. And number two, the way of the blessed.

[4:48] The way of the deceived and the way of the blessed. So first, the way of the deceived. James desires that his hearers not be deceived.

And he's giving them instruction to that very end. So you have to notice just off the cuff that it is possible to be a hearer of the word and to be deceived.

I think he's even suggesting that you can be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger.

That you can sit under the instruction of the word and take the word in and yet be deceived.

Out of great love and out of great care for you, for your soul. Let me say to you, my friends, it is altogether possible to believe that you are in the faith.

That you have placed your trust in the personal work of Jesus Christ. But to be deceived. And we say these kinds of things a lot in the life of our church.

[5:49] Because we live in an age where it seems that many people are, in fact, deceived. But I want you to know that we don't do this because we want to cause doubt in your heart. We want you to have the assurance of your salvation.

We want you to stand confident in Christ. We don't want you to come here every week and walk away going, I just don't know. But we want you to know. And often the warning is not issued.

And so we want to clearly, with great clarity, issue the warning. It's possible to think you're in the faith and not be in the faith. We live in an age of cheap grace.

I want to define that term for you. And I'm going to do it with the one who coined the term. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was an early 20th century pastor. You need to learn about him.

He's a wonderful study in history. And he defines this term cheap grace as opposed to costly grace in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*.

[6:51] So listen to this paragraph from that book. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. Baptism without church discipline.

Communion without confession. Absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship. Grace without the cross.

Grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field. For the sake of it, a man will go and sell all that he has.

It is the pearl of great price to buy, which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ. For whose sake a man will pluck out the eyes, which causes him to stumble.

It is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. To follow Christ is costly.

[7:54] It requires all of us. Last week, I rushed through a reading of the parable of the sower from Mark chapter 4. Toward the end of the sermon.

I want to put this toward the beginning of our time together today. And so, if you will, turn with me.

Keep James chapter 1, Mark. We're coming right back to it. But turn with me to Mark chapter 4.

And let's take another slightly less hurried look at this text. Mark chapter 4, verses 3 through 9.

Now, as I read this, I will add comments.

But these comments are Jesus' explanation following his telling of this parable. This is one of those rare parables where he tells us exactly what it means.

And he says this beginning in verse 3 of Mark 4. Listen. There's a call right away to be quick to hear.

[8:52] Listen. Behold, a sower went out to sow. And we're told later that the sower is one who's sowing the word. Who's making a broad gospel call.

Sowing the word. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path. And the birds came and devoured it. So it's seed that never takes root at all.

Satan comes along and snatches it away. Satan is the father of lies. So some other lies come in and take the seed of the truth away.

Verse 5. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil. And immediately it sprang up since it had no depth of soil. So there's some apparent growth from this.

But then verse 6 says, And when the sun rose, it was scorched. And since it had no root, it withered away. We're told that the sun is tribulation or trouble and persecution.

[9:58] So trial comes into the life of this soil. And it withers. And it doesn't come back. Right? There's no progress.

Verse 7. Other seed fell among thorns. And the thorns grew up and choked it. And it yielded no grain. And Jesus tells us later that these thorns are the cares and the riches of the world.

And lastly, other seed fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding 30-fold and 60-fold and 100-fold.

And this is the fruit of righteousness. Right? People who are producing good works. And he concludes the parable in verse 9 by saying, And he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Be quick to hear. Understand that it is possible to receive the word and to not bear fruit.

[11:08] James here in our text, you can go back to James 1, uses a bit of a parable in warning us not to deceive ourselves. That's what he's doing in verse 23 and verse 24.

If you're a hearer of the word and not a doer, if you're not obedient to the word that you hear, then you're like a man who looks intently at your natural face in a mirror.

You look at your face. You see your face. And what does he say happens? He looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. It doesn't bear any work in your life at all.

Look in the mirror and you forget what you look like. If we are saved by Christ, right, we have been made fundamentally new.

We no longer have hearts that are bent toward the world, toward sinfulness, towards rebellion against God. We now have hearts that are bent toward obedience, toward being his children.

[12:11] And our lives will, in varying degree, look different or fundamentally changed. In the discipline of my children, I say to them all the time, you're my kids, right?

And I love you. And my children want to obey. My children want to listen to their loving father, right? They want to be identified with their father and his ways.

And of course, I don't do this perfectly. But when my children disobey, I don't reject them as my children. I don't put them out on the curb with a free child sign around their neck.

But I say to them again, you're my child. And my children want to listen to the loving instruction of their father. Imperfect, but loving instruction. And beloved, we have a heavenly father whose instruction is always perfect.

It is never with fail. It always is the right instruction for us. And therefore, as his children, we ought to want to obey.

[13:17] We'll do it imperfectly, but we ought to desire to turn away from the things of this world and to turn toward God. If we have been delivered from our bondage to sin, we will be moved progressively to look more and more like our Savior from day to day.

A quotation on your bulletin by Thomas Brooks. He says, There is no fear of knowing too much of the Bible. Right? Oh, no, the Bible. Right? It is a rich, rich book for our good and for the glory of God.

There is no fear of knowing too much of the Bible, he says, but there is a great amount of fear that goes into practicing too little. Now, I think at this point, it may be helpful to make careful distinctions about how we are saved and how we are kept to the end.

There's always a fear in talking about sanctification, which is what we're going to be discussing at length, of making people believe that they are saved by their works.

No, you are not saved by your works. I want to be very clear about that. No, no, no. We are saved by the works of another, the Lord Jesus Christ. His perfect work, his sacrificial death.

[14:36] We cannot be saved by our works. So you've got to write that big at the top of your page. If that's going to be confusing to you at any point in the rest of what I'm going to say today, we cannot be saved by

our works.

But our works will give evidence of our salvation. Now, to work this out for you a bit, I'm going to give to you what is called the ordo salutis or order of salvation.

We are first elected before the foundation of the world. God has chosen people for his glory.

Second, for our benefit, an atonement was made. Jesus Christ died in our place, paid the penalty for our sin.

Third, there's a general gospel call made. Anybody sitting in this room who is a Christian heard the gospel, whether it was proclaimed, word, or picked up and read in a track form, in the scripture itself, some way the gospel of Jesus Christ was shared with you.

[15:52] There was a gospel call made. And the spirit of Christ took that gospel call and made an inward call. It's step four.

An inward gospel call was made. And he made your heart new in the act of regeneration, right? Caused your heart to be changed so that, in step six, you could believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You could repent and place faith in your conversion in this gospel call. And at that moment, step seven, you were declared by God justified, declared righteous.

In Christ, all of your sins forgiven, all of his righteousness given to you, you were justified in him.

Step eight in the Ordo Salutis, you are sanctified.

And we find in the scripture three different tenses for this word. So I want to be clear about this, right? There's both a past, present, and future use of this word because to be sanctified to mean to be declared holy or set apart.

[17:04] So there's a past tense to this, like when you are justified, you are also sanctified. You are set apart. Set apart for God. But there's also a present reality to that.

We are being set apart. We are growing in our holiness in the way in which we represent God. And this is the most common usage of this term.

Typically, when you hear it spoken, right, from a stage, from a pulpit, we talk about sanctification.

This is what we're talking about, right? The life in which we now live. Having been justified, we are being sanctified.

And then from time to time, it'll also be used in a future tense. We'll be fully and finally set apart one day. And for that, we typically use the term glorification, which is the last step in that, right?

When our body of flesh will be put off fully, we'll be delivered completely from sin when we're in the presence of our Savior. So election, atonement, a general gospel call, an inward gospel call, work by the Spirit, regeneration, conversion, which happens with repentance and faith, justification, sanctification, glorification, right?

[18:15] So again, hear me, we are not saved by our works. But as a proof that we have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in the personal work of Jesus Christ alone, we will make this evident by the power of the Spirit, through progressive sanctification.

There is much well-meaning confusion about the nature of sanctification, which is why I want to bring clarity to the issue, right? By showing you the five prominent views, some more prominent than others.

And this is the back of your bulletin. This is why I think you'll benefit from having this in your hands. Please don't see this as a distraction to the text today, right?

I'm trying to explain to you why James picks this up, why he says it's important that we be doers of the word and not just hearers, right? This is all an explanation of how it is that we can deceive ourselves.

So first, and quickly, and I want to say, I didn't create any of these images. I don't want to be a plagiarist here.

[19:26] So if you want to know where I got these things from, I'll be happy to send them to you. I'll send you the article that they're found in, explains these things more and more. So first, the Wesleyan view, sanctification, taught originally by John Wesley.

Note, in every one of these diagrams, the cross is the point of salvation. That's what it's communicating. So you'll see first work of grace in this first one.

Saved by grace, Wesley would have said, but non-sanctified at this point. And at some point in the life of a Christian, there's some crisis of faith and a second working of grace.

This is what he argued. And at this point in the Christian's life, they experience entire sanctification, or he also called it Christian perfection.

He didn't mean that we were made entirely like Christ, but that we would put off all known sin. Still capable of sinning, but we would put off all known sin.

[20:30] And in this chart, the little dotted arrows pointing up and down means that Wesley would argue that you could step out of this state of perfection and then back into this state of perfection.

But it wasn't so much a progress being made, but an either or. You're stepping in, you're stepping out of this position. Out of this, I'd suggest to you, some very unhealthy views of sanctification have come.

I don't know that Wesley would have supported, but perhaps some who hold this view of sanctification claim that they haven't sinned in years. You hear that claim being made.

And I hope that you go, what? I've probably sinned, not known, in the moment that you've seen me standing on this stage, that some way my inclinations or my motives have been wrong in what I've done.

But Wesley brought it down to this very narrow, known sin category. And even then, I would say, how could you claim if you're not paying attention, if you think in years you haven't sinned?

[21:38] Now, out of this Wesleyan view, the Wesleyan view collided with Pentecostalism, and some other views came about. I made these small to fit them on the page, but also because they're kind of subcategories of this same view of sanctification.

So you have the Keswick view, which is a region in England. That's where the name comes from, the Keswick view. And in this, you may have heard this phrase before, let go and let God.

The key to this view is trusting, not trying. In the same way, you're saved, but here you're not spirit-filled.

They would call you a defeated Christian. And I don't know about you, but when I was converted, I was in no way defeated. Christ declared me victorious in him.

They make the distinction between the carnal person and the spiritual person. Again, another crisis of faith where a person stops trying so hard and just lets go and has God work in them.

[22:44] Perfection. Another spirit-filled, victorious Christian life. The congregational holiness movement came out of this. We have a congregational holiness congregation that meets just down the road here.

Free Chapel, if you're familiar with, is a congregational holiness church. I don't know how both of these congregations, if they hold this view strictly or not, but this is the view that birthed those kinds of movements.

Also, the Pentecostal view, right? You're saved. This is the first work of grace, but you're a defeated Christian at that time until you're filled with the spirit.

You get the spirit baptism, right? Many Pentecostals will argue that's the first time you receive the spirit, that you're evidenced in various outward signs like speaking in tongues and you live this victorious Christian life at that second work of grace in your life.

Now, some of us may encounter people who are believing these and may not even know, right?

Probably few people would say to you, oh, I hold the Keswick view of sanctification, but you might see it work in, maybe even in your own thinking, the way you ought to live.

[23:55] I've been saved by the grace of God. I ought to live more perfectly than I'm currently living. You might have some of this work inside of your thought process. The one I'm more concerned about tends to be held more regularly is the Chaferian view of sanctification.

This view comes out of, there's three prominent theologians that have espoused this view. The primary one is Lewis Sperry Chafer. That's the Chaferian view.

And they all come out of Dallas Theological Seminary. Now, this is a prominent view in American evangelicalism.

I grew up in churches under this view of sanctification. We get phrases like backslidden and the idea of rededication from this view of sanctification.

You may be more familiar with it than you realize. This view divides up mankind into three different categories. First, the natural or unconverted man.

[25:07] second, the carnal, which is the converted but not spirit-filled man. Again, the term defeated is often used in this case.

This is a person that accepts Christ as Savior. This view would argue that you can make a profession of faith in Christ most typically during an invitation.

So you've walked an aisle, you've signed a card, and they want to give you assurance at that moment. So you've accepted Christ as your Savior, but you've not accepted Him as your Lord. They draw a distinction between the two. You can have Jesus as Savior and not as Lord, but there will be some crisis of faith in your life where you really dedicate yourself to this. And at that point, they would call you spirit-filled, at which point you begin this process of bit by bit by bit growing in holiness.

A little more tomorrow than the day before. Now, perhaps I need a doctorate to understand the arguments of the Chaferian view.

[26:16] And perhaps that doctorate would have to come from Dallas Theological Seminary. But I want to suggest that if I am quick to hear and slow to speak, that the Bible makes it plain that we are to have, if we're going to have Jesus as our Savior, then He must also be our Lord.

I love the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, the clarity of the Bible. So let me just read to you a couple of texts. Jesus said in John chapter 14 and verse 15, this Jesus that we're talking about, He said, if you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

How do we have Jesus as Savior? Certainly we love Him as Savior. He saved my soul and suggests that we don't then have to keep His commandments. If we love Christ, we love His commandments.

He must be our Savior and our Lord. God bless you The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 10, Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. And this is on the tail of a bunch of qualities that should be exhibited in the life of a Christian. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote further in this letter that we're studying in James chapter 2 and verse 14, What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?

[27:57] Seems very clear to me. As if he's saying, What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has Jesus as Savior but not as Lord? Can that faith save him?

James asks and he'll go on to argue that it can't. James chapter 2 and verse 20, Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith, apart from works, is useless?

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John chapter 2 verse 15 and following, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all there's in the world the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world.

And in 1 John chapter 5 in verse 3, John writes, This is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome.

[29:07] Many years ago in the life of this church I had a young man who was a college student at the time walk up to me and said, My father is furious with you.

This is not a thing you want to hear a college student say, although it's not the only time I've heard it. I said, Really? Why? And he said, You're a heretic because you believe in lordship salvation. And I had no concept. I was like, I don't know what that even means. And so I said to him, Well, I'm going to go look into that. If I've erred in any way I certainly want to be made aware of it. I don't want to teach a heresy in the church.

So I went to my computer that afternoon and I typed in lordship salvation and very quickly within a few moments went, Oh, Oh yeah, I totally believe this to be the case.

If we're to have Jesus as our savior, he must be our Lord. He's going to work in us not with perfection. Don't hear me say that. I'm not saying I'm perfect. That's not what I'm saying.

[30:10] But if Jesus is my savior, I will desire to grow in holiness. I want to honor him. I want to listen to his good commands. So the next

Lord's day, I went to this young man and I said, Yep, I would suggest to you that I am not a heretic, but that is what I believe to be true.

And I turned to first John chapter five in verse three. This is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome. And I'm very grateful that this young guy searched out the scripture and stayed with our church until he moved away and he is our accountant for our church to this day.

Right? So if Jesus is our Lord, we will be pursuing holiness. Right? We will find this miraculous work in us that we'll want to turn away from the things of the world and turn toward the things of God.

But we don't do this immediately. We don't do this with perfection. John also wrote in first John chapter one and verse eight, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Right? So James warns us that we ought to be very careful not to deceive ourselves. Right? That we ought to be doers of this word. We ought to love the commands of God and want to follow God. John also says, but don't be deceived and think that you don't have sin.

[31:34] So we must be careful. Do not be deceived. We're going to be told verse 25 that we're to persevere.

We're to continue to follow. That it's going to take effort on our part. And we do not do this alone. This is why you need the church.

The greatest affirmations my salvation is that I have a group of people that I walk together with. A group of people who are looking into my life. A group of people who bring to me loving correction when I'm at fault.

That I might repent and continue to pursue Christ. We need the spirit. We need the word. We need one another. Be careful.

Do not be deceived. It is very possible to be a hearer of the word and to think that you're a Christian and your life looks nothing like the word.

[32:35] Don't be deceived. Help others not to be deceived. So this is the way of the deceived. Right? Always hearing, never acting.

But we also see the way of the blessed. He says, but the one who looks into the perfect law and this word, this Greek word looks means gaze.

It's a deep gazing. Right? It's not merely a quick glance. It's a staring within the perfect law. Right? The commands given to us.

The law of liberty. The gospel of Jesus Christ that sets us free from bondage to having to earn our acceptance before God. But the law of liberty that sets us free from that.

Sets us free from having to earn salvation, which we cannot do. But a glorious law that we get to follow now out of grateful obedience to what God has done for us.

[33:36] So the one who does this, who looks intently into this law and perseveres in it, who continues to work, to labor, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts.

He will be, there's this blessing declared, blessed. He will be blessed. In his doing. So this brings us on the back of your bulletin to this final view, which is most common called the reformed view.

And just to be fair, I put that on the sheet, but I really just wanted to say the biblical view. I really make good effort at being kind-hearted to people that I disagree with.

And I disagree, I disagree with the Chafferian view because I think that it's damning to people. I think there are people who think they're Christians and they're fine with that Jesus is Savior piece.

They're okay with that. They're like, yeah, yeah, got the Jesus is Savior part of this and I'm good. And they think they're in the faith and they're not in the faith. They're deceiving themselves and they're being deceived.

[34:48] So, the biblical view of sanctification. When we are saved, which is entirely a work of God, we did nothing to earn it.

We could do nothing to earn it. We were dead in our sin. He made us alive in Christ. We're submitting to him both as Savior and Lord.

And we don't do this perfectly. We still carry around the baggage of our flesh. We have new hearts but we still have our flesh.

And our flesh just loves sin but our new hearts do not. So, it's the work of a Christian as an individual and a Christian in community to take a careful look of our lives, to make our calling and

election sure, to be constantly looking and assessing and not in an obsessive way, but to ask, am I growing in holiness?

Do I see an improvement within me? Do I love the things of the world or do I love the things of God? When I sin, am I hardened to that sin?

[35:57] Or do I hate that sin? Do I want to put it off and put on righteousness? Do I see the Spirit of God active and at work in me?

Right? As I take up the word, am I being a doer of the word? This view of sanctification is synergistic.

It takes effort on our part. We don't let go and let God. We continue to work. We pick up the daily things that we ought to do. The habits of grace.

The things that God has given to us to grow in Him. And we press and we press and we press recognizing all along anything good that we accomplish is a work of the Spirit in our lives.

Bringing about obedience bit by bit by bit. We ask others to examine our lives. Brother, what do you think? Am I in the faith?

[36:55] Do you see me growing in Christ? When we have our doubts, we look to our brothers. Brother? Sister? Am I in the faith? I've given much counsel over the past decade plus to people who are doubting to say, oh, but I've watched your life over these past years.

And you love the things of God. You are growing in your faith. Jesus tells a parable in Matthew chapter 21 beginning in verse 28 and following.

He says, what do you think? A man had two sons and he went to the first and said, son, go and work in the vineyard today. And he answered, I will not. But afterward, he changed his mind and he went.

So he heard the word and eventually he was obedient to the word. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, I go, sir, but did not go.

So he heard the word, but he was not obedient to the word. Jesus asked, which of the two did the will of his father? And they said, these are the Pharisees, the first, Jesus said to them, truly I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.

[38:14] Hated, hated people by the Pharisees. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

Our belief is evidenced by our obedience. Hear that. Oh, hear that. Do not be deceived. Hear James' exhortation one more time.

So at the beginning, I said, I just wanted to read it and say, okay, I'll read it one more time. Well, I said a bunch of things and now let me read it one more time. 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 hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

[39:26] Let's pray together.