

We are the beloved of the Lord.

In

LOVE

HE

created us.
came to us.
died for us.
makes us His own.

folding us into
transforming us by
sending us out in

HIS

LOVE

By our

LOVE

this world will

know that we are HIS

See HIM in us

as He lives His life of love in us and through us, **to the glory of God.**

I know it can be tempting to get tired of talking about living a life of love. And then... I'm reminded that the love we're talking about **isn't...**

- a liberal – all truth is relative, you should accept anything... kind of love
- a flimsy - avoid conflict and call it love... kind of love
- a mean – love truth and hate people... kind of love

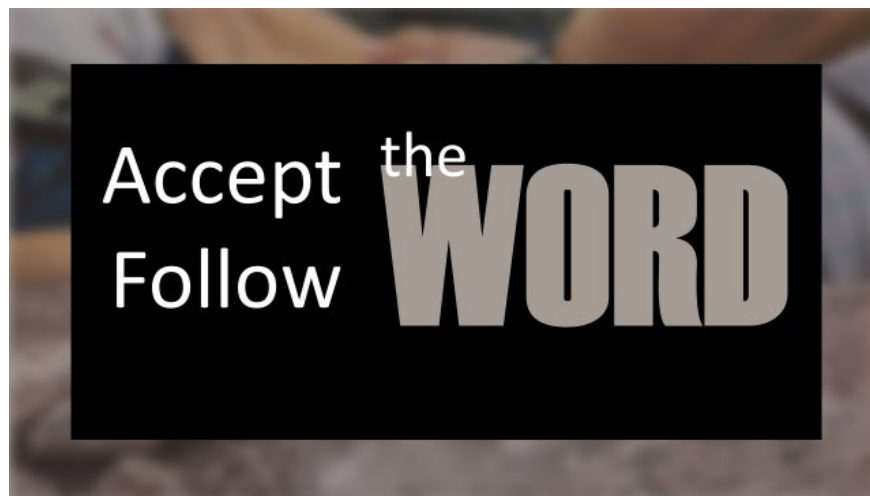
This is unmerited, sin crushing. Sinner saving, life giving, perfect, pure, forever Love from the Living God.

May we never grow tired of hearing about and being called and invited into the perfect love of our Heavenly Father.

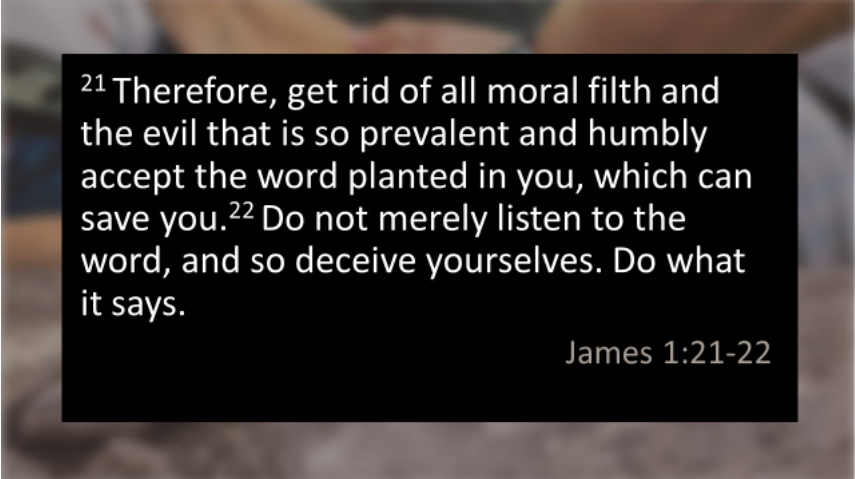
It's out of a deep understanding of **that Love** and being inspired by **that love** that James instructs us to be... *quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry*. That posture towards God and others is in line with the character of God so James calls us into it. **How have you been doing with that this week?**

This morning we'll look at the next few verses in James where James drills down one more layer in regards to this call to listen. He challenges us to not just be listeners of the Word but **doers of the Word**. And by **the Word** I mean the teachings of Jesus recorded in the New Testament along with the Law and the Prophets recorded in the Old Testament.

James tells us two things:

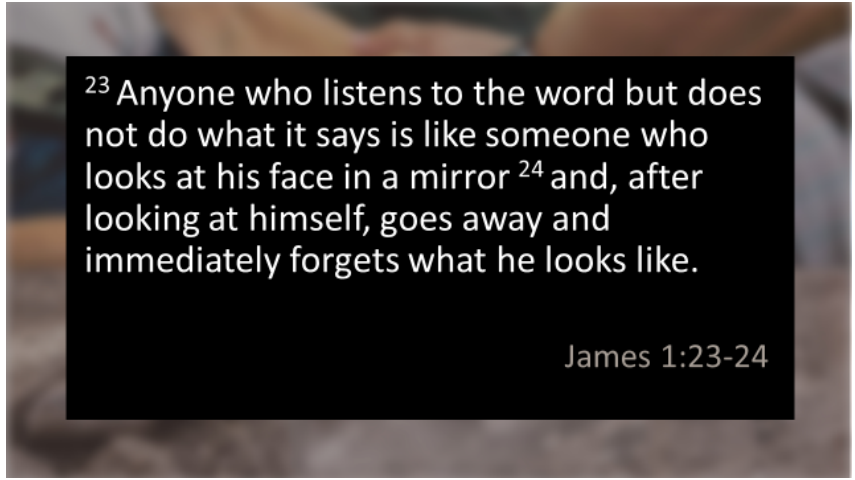


Read James 1:21-27



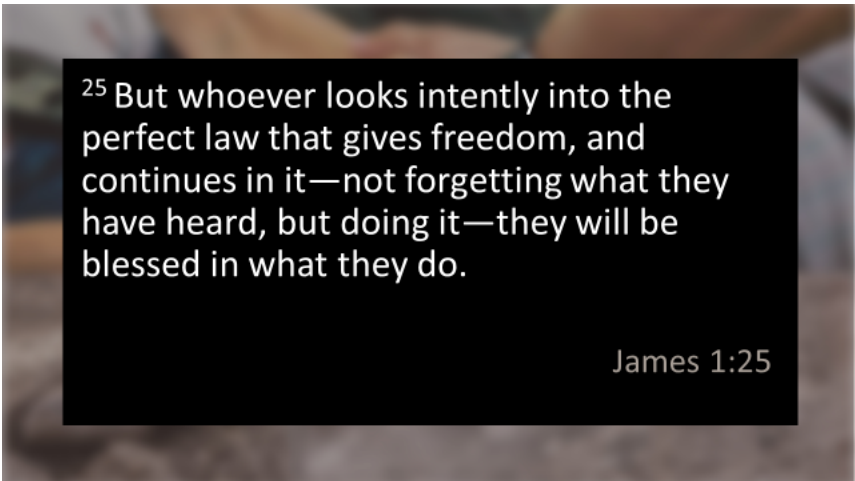
²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:21-22



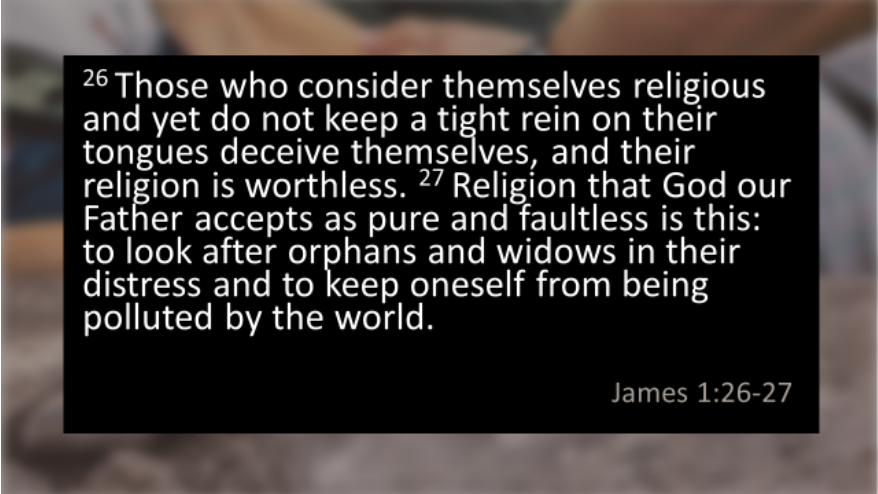
²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

James 1:23-24



²⁵ 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.

James 1:25



²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:26-27



Accept the
WORD

James presents a contrast between getting entangled with the moral filth and evil that is so prevalent **vs.** Humbly accepting the Word planted in you.

Paint a picture

Moral filth and evil: Pornography, Human trafficking, thirst for power, wealth, and leisure and how those thirsts usher a person deeper and deeper into selfishness which closes us in on ourselves and kills us from the inside out – keeping us separated from the perfect love of the Living God.

Why do we ever walk down that path? Because we are born with a nature that seeks our own glory instead of the Glory of our maker. Every step down that path is fueled by a selfish pursuit and we all find ourselves taking occasional strolls down that path. James says, get rid of these things. Don't walk down that path.

Humbly accept the Word planted in you: Ephesians 1:13 and John 14:26. This is both passive and active. God gives the Spirit/Word. You accept it (or Him). To accept Him is to **receive Him, to welcome Him, to take Him in.**

Illus: Salesman vs friend at your door.

Receive Him and allow Him to make His way into every aspect of your life.

The **Word** is in part the voice of the Holy Spirit who resides in each follower of Jesus.

The **Word** is in part this inspired record of the Law, the Prophets, and the teachings of Jesus.

To humbly accept the **Word** is to welcome / receive / take in deeply the voice of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of the Bible. The humility comes in the sense that by taking in this guest, you are setting aside your way of living and adopting a new way of living that serves Him.

James writes that this **Word** can save you. One scholar calls this the *triple pattern of salvation*. The **Word** planted in you has saved, is saving and will save you. The work of the Spirit in the follower of Jesus is past, present and future. It is finished yet it's ongoing.

James encourages us **get rid of** moral filth and evil **and to** humbly accept the Word planted in us.

The next things James tells us is to...



His summary of this passage and in some ways of the entire letter is, *“Don’t merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

Illustration: Mirror – wasn’t really looking. Oxy story.

Illustration: Reading – wasn’t really “reading” or taking it in.

Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves. To “deceive yourselves” would be to act as if mere listening is enough. *Point back to illustrations.*

The kind of listening that James is encouraging us towards is a listening that accepts and welcomes the Word so deeply that it impacts you – changes you – informs you. *Oh... I have oxy on my face.* And then you act on it: I should wash this Oxy off my face.

In verse 25 James continues to reinforce this same point: *If you look intently into the perfect law and follow it, you'll be blessed.*

First – a word about the *perfect law*. James is using this term differently than Paul does in his letters **and** he is seeing the “law” differently than Jews have traditionally seen it.

For James, here... the Perfect Law is the teachings of Jesus including the ways that Jesus explained and interpreted the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. The law that the Jews have known for generations has now been fulfilled and perfected in Jesus. The **perfect law** is synonymous with the **Word** that James has been talking about.

Now, in regards to the **blessing** - I don't think it's a mystery.

- Look in the mirror. Accept it as trustworthy.
- Notice you have oxy on your face.
- Then go wash it off.

You'll be blessed if you do this.

- Listen carefully to the Word. Accept it as trustworthy.
- Notice how it calls you and empowers to respond.
- Then respond with action.

You'll be blessed if you do this!

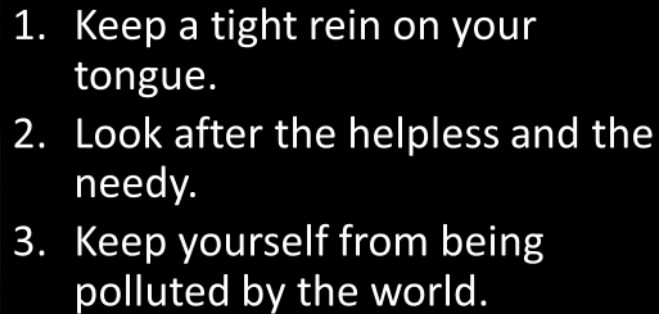
In verses 26-27 James gets really practical.

First – a note about “religion”

There were certainly men and women in that day (as there are in this day and age) who were religious in that they followed a collection of practices which aligned them with a certain deity. James points out the **utter** emptiness of going through the motions of certain religious practices **without** one's life being aligned with the heart and instruction of the God they claim to worship.

James and Paul and Jesus make it clear. The **“religion”** that the Living God accepts is not actually a “collection of practices” as much as it is **faith**. The “religion” of faith which pleases God involves... washing the Oxy of your face. It involves doing the things that the Word/Spirit/the law instructs you to do. Faith involves **living** a life of love!

And here are James's three practical admonitions:

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1. Keep a tight rein on your tongue.
 2. Look after the helpless and the needy.
 3. Keep yourself from being polluted by the world.

1. Keep a tight rein on your tongue. Ephesians 4:29
2. Look after the helpless and the needy. Feel nudged; please contact me.
3. Keep yourself from being polluted by the world.
 - This doesn't mean stay separate from the world. Jesus stepped in deep. Do the same.
 - This does mean be vigilant in monitoring the messages that you are taking in.

How is the Word speaking to you in this very moment? What should you commit to do this week?

Listen to this Word and do what it says.

Imagine you're standing at the mirror. You've noticed the Oxy on your face. Yet you reason...

- I don't have time to wash it off now; I'll do it later.
- Maybe it will actually help to keep it on a bit longer.

That's ridiculous.

Perhaps many of us are stuck doing the same thing right now. You know the Spirit has been prompting you to...

- Invite that coworker out to eat.
- Speak a word of encouragement to that hurting person.
- Stop using that inappropriate humor.
- Spend time with your kids.
- Offer selfless love to your spouse.
- Offer help to someone who is helpless or needy.
- Address your addiction.

Sadly, many of us in many moments... hear the Word and reason...

- I don't have time to do that now; I'll do it later.
- Maybe that's not actually what the Lord wants me to do... I'm sure he'll take care of that some better way than my involvement.

Humbly accept the Word planted in you. And do what it says.



Why?

Because the Word is Jesus – and He is offering you Love - unmerited, sin crushing, sinner-saving, life-giving, perfect, pure, forever Love from the Living God. I hope you'll accept it.