

**Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

**Central Truth**

Listen, Obey and Live the Word.

**Purpose**

In this sermon, I want the listener to be challenged to put their faith into practise – watching their mouths, using their hands and protecting their hearts.

**Outline**

1:19-21      Accept the Word

    1:19-20      Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, Slow to become Angry

    1:21          So...negative – get rid of all moral filth

                    Positive – humbly accept the Word

1:22-25      Obey the Word

    1:22-24      Listen and do nothing – deceived

    1:25          Listen and Look intently – not forgetting

1:26-27      Live the Word

    1:26a        Mouth – tight rein

    1:27a        Hands - look after the needy

    1:27b        Heart – keep oneself from being polluted by the world

**Reading**

James 1:19-27

**Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

CHECK TIME

**Talk**

**Opening**

- The boss left for London - confident in the team that he had behind him.
- 'Keep the business going, follow those leads, maintain the client base – when I get back I'll get you to brief me.'
- 'While I am gone, I will send you some instructions – and if I have any further things to pass on, you can ask those I have placed in leadership.'

- With that – the boss was gone.

PAUSE

- Now imagine, three months later when the boss returns – and walks into the office to find it totally disorganised. The phone ringing, but no one to answer, the carpets unvacuumed, the bins overflowing, the waiting room magazines all out of date.
  - And walking on beyond into the staff room he finds the employees playing chess and snacking on cheese and wine – with the TV on in the background - with the footy blaring.
  - A little bit surprised, he walks on further into the board room to find the leadership team having a terrific time playing computer games – some form of 'age of empires'.
  - What's all this? He asks, slightly exasperated.
  - And one of the leaders stands – 'welcome back boss – we are just having a bit of fun. Do you want to join us?
  - 'What about the customers, what about the business, what about the things I left with you to do?
  - 'Oh don't stress, they can wait – we'll get to it eventually'
  - 'But – what about the letters I sent you, all those instructions – what have you been doing?
  - 'Oh, those letters - Yes thanks they were very helpful. We have all read them, in fact we got together each week to study them, to really understand what you were asking – and we organised ourselves into small groups to read the letters over and over again – they were very helpful!'
  - [Boss] So..., did you do what I asked?
- PAUSE
- 'Umm, not sure what you mean. We read the letters, wasn't that enough? I mean there were a lot of things in those letters, you didn't really expect us to do all of it did you?'

**Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

PAUSE

- The letter of James is a letter that comes with the expectation that those who read it, will do what it is asking.
- In fact the letter from James is a letter that has the same expectation as what the gospel does – that those who accept it, will do what it asks of them.
- In fact, this letter to believers challenges us who have been given the word of truth (1:18) to listen to it, obey it and live it.
- And the sharpest criticism in the passage we look at today from James 1, is for those who have heard the Word and accepted it, have not allowed it to change the way that they live.

**Prayer**

*Dear Lord and Father,*

*We are about to listen to your word – and so you know whether we will accept it or not.*

*And you know whether your word will change anything in our lives. And you know if your word will do anything to change the way we speak, think or act.*

*Father, do your work, we humbly ask.*

*In Jesus Name. AMEN*

- James 1:19-27 is all about listening to the Word of God and obeying it – and in a few ways it holds a mirror up before us and asks us to take a look at ourselves.
  - In verse 18 (the verse we finished on last week) we are reminded that it was through the word of truth that God has given us birth – another way of saying he has given us life eternal through Jesus.
  - What follows in verses 19-21 is a picture of a person who *accepts that word* – such that it is implanted in them.
  - Then in verses 22-25 a picture of a person who *obeys that word* – such that they do what it says.
  - And then in verses 26-27 a challenge to *live that word* in three particular ways.

**1:19-21      Accept the Word**

**1:19-20      Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, Slow to become Angry**

- I love how pastoral James is.
- In verse 19, he draws his listeners to himself ‘my dear brethren’ – there is something I would like you to take special note of’
- If you are someone who has accepted this saving word then make sure you are a person who is *quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*’

## **Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

### *Explanation*

- Although James is writing at a different time, this observation of the way people listen and speak is probably timeless.
- It is more normal to be *quick* to speak and *slow* to listen which no doubt often leads to misunderstanding and anger.
- James turns that on its heads and says, a believer is not meant to follow the norm.
- They should stand out from the norm.
- The key word here is ‘Listen’.
- If we are truly to be persons of the Word then, we must first be people willing to listen to that word – so take a moment, slow down and turn your ears to what is being said.
  
- And there is good reason to do that (verse 20) – you see for the person who is too distracted, too busy, too interested in the words *they* want to say rather than the words that are *being said* - then they are a person at risk of not doing what God desires.

### *Application*

- I cannot imagine what James would have thought about the age of visual media in which we live.
- How difficult it has become to listen.
- The irony of the ‘sound-bite age’ is that now despite so much being said in so few words – there is so much misunderstanding.
- And when it comes to anything longer in form, which includes the Bible, we get so easily distracted – that we fail to read, or we restrict the listening to it, or we move on so quickly to the next thing – and so its significance is lost.
- But yet, that does not mean we as a society has less to say - oh no, we say as much or more, but just with much more ignorance.
- And because what is said is then so misunderstood, then our anger gets aroused – and an angry attitude is never a listening teachable attitude.
- The wisdom of James to believers here – is to stop, turn our ears to listen, slow our mouths down before speaking, and calm our hearts in becoming angry.
- I personally - so need to hear this!

### PAUSE

- If you are the kind of person that would like suggestions for how to be better at accepting to the Word – then verse 21 gives you both a negative and a positive application.

**1:21                    So...negative – get rid of all moral filth**

Negative – ‘get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent’.

## **Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

- I take it – that James is describing a sort of spiritual house clean – that is the removal of all that exists that taints or blemishes that perfect life-giving word which is supposed to dwell within you.
- Like a termite to a piece of wood, is sin to the Christian seeking to accept the word.
- Where there is moral filth or evil in your life, even if hidden within, it will eat away and make it hard to accept that which God has done to make us clean in Christ.
- That is the curse of sin. It undermines our confidence in what is true and life giving, it causes us to doubt ourselves, it causes us to doubt God – and left unchecked, it will eventually eat through us.

### **1:21 Positive – humbly accept the Word**

But the positive is much better – ‘humbly accept the word planted in you which saves you’.

- For us hard as that battle against sin might be, the key battle strategy is to humbly rest on the Word.
- ‘Humbly’ because it is only when we allow the word to speak louder than our desire, that we see how the word does its best within us.
- It is the word that measures us up, and identifies in us what is filth and what is evil and says quite clearly to that sin, you don’t belong.
- We all know what sin looks like in our lives and it will be different from person to person – but unless we let go of the sin that we so want to cling too, and humbly give it over – then God’s word will only remain a set of nice words or guidelines that we give passing reference too.

*PAUSE*

### **1:22-25 Obey the Word**

- In verses 22-25 James puts out a challenge – if you have accepted the word, then obey it.
- If the word has been *given*, if the word has been *accepted*, if the word has been *implanted* within you, if the word has been *listened* to – how logical it should be that we *do* what it says.
- James gives us a picture of two people here – one who is deceived and one who is blessed.

### **1:22-24 Listen and do nothing – deceived**

- The *deceived* one is like the person who looks into the mirror and then turns away immediately forgetting what he looks like.
  - Now no one should do that. If there was ever a face that we should be able to recognise – it should be the one that we see every day, every time we gaze into a mirror - our own.

## **Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

- The impossibility of this scenario should give us pause for thought to realise that for anyone to say that they have accepted the Word – then a necessary outcome should be that we are also obedient to that word.
- If you ignore, if you fail to do what the word says, then it is clear that you have *not* really accepted the word.

### **1:25 Listen and Look intently – not forgetting**

- The *blessed* one is like the person who *looks intently* into the perfect law and continues to do what it says.
- The ‘perfect law’ here, I take to be an extension of the given word – I think James has used this expression here because he knows he is speaking to Christians who have Jewish heritage and who may be at risk of thinking that as descendants of the people of Israel they are automatic inheritors of the kingdom of God.
- He will come back to this law in the next chapter.
- James wants them to realise that unless they are living, not the law, but by the *perfect* fulfilled law that is the gospel of Jesus, then they are as lost as the deceived one who forgets what his face looks like.

### *Explanation*

- Faith and obedience go together here.
- James, doesn’t beat around the bush, he does not get caught up with theological argument – he just says – practice what you believe.

### *Application*

- There are 208 people in the 5pm Church family – look around - you are sitting beside the ones who have made it this week.
- Most of our number would freely call ourselves Christian – praise God.
- Most of that number would claim to be saved by Jesus, people who have accepted his word of truth.
- Every member of this family is able to listen to God’ word.
- And every member of this family should be actively looking to be obedient to that word which you know has saved you.
- Because, says James, if you listen to God’s word, but have no intention to obey it, then you are simply deceiving yourself.
- Friends, look intently into the perfect law – the one which has given you freedom in Christ - and do what he asks of you.
- I hope that for many, what James says here will be an encouragement to keep practicing what the gospel asks of you.
- I suspect, that for some, maybe many, what James says here will be a kick up the pants to do something that reflects the gospel that you say you believe.

**Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

PAUSE

*Explanation*

- Now let me just make one quick qualifier.
- At the end of verse 25 – you can see that James says that those who do what the perfect law says – ‘he will be blessed in what he does’.
- We can read this wrong, if we assume that for every obedient and good deed that we do, we will receive some immediate blessing.
- This is not suggesting a ‘good works theology’ – it is not saying that those who do good works will be immediately blessed by their efforts – although there are many times when that may be the case. Praise God.
- We know from our experience – there are Christians around the world doing amazing things in war-torn countries like Afghanistan and Iraq – their obedience is valuable, but their experience may hardly be one that is blessed.
- In our own congregation we have folk who are putting in to practise what the word of God asks of them, yet they still suffer under the burden of physical or mental illness - their experience may hardly be one that is blessed.
  
- In Chapter 1:12, we see the blessed man – and this man is one who is obviously under trial – but he is blessed because as he comes through that trial, he ultimately enjoys the promised ‘crown of life’.
- The blessing that comes from obedience to the word, are the blessings that are ultimately realised when we enter into eternity.
- When we stand before the one who has saved us, and we are asked how we put into practise what the word has said.
- ‘Yes, I know you went to church - yes I know you were in Home Group - Yes I know you have listened and studied my word, - Yes I know you have heard my instructions – tell me little one, how have you put what I asked of you into practice?’

PAUSE

**1:26-27      Live the Word**

- The final section of Chapter 1, verses 26-27, offers three suggestions for how one who has *accepted* the word, who wants to *obey* the word should in fact *live* the word.
- James says – do it with your mouth, your hands and your heart.

**1:26      Mouth – tight rein**

- Verse 26 – keep a tight rein on your tongue – because if you don’t, what you say you believe will be worthless – you will discredit your faith.
- So much damage can happen when you open your *mouth* – slander, lying, filthy language, gossip, unholy criticism, deceit.

## **Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

- Friends as people who have the word of truth implanted within us, what should come out of our mouths should be more reflective of that word, than of the world.
- James will use Chapter 3 to go into more detail.

### **1:27a            Hands - look after the needy**

- Verse 27 – use your *hands* to look after the orphans and widows.
- As we saw in 1 Timothy 5 a few weeks back, orphans and widows can be representative of those who are more vulnerable Those who are needy and at risk.
- Everyone is needy, yet in a church family all are needed, but there are some who are more in distress – and James says to the church, put your religion into practice and care for them.
- We are going to hear about some of the ways we can do that through the City Light Ministry in a few moments – especially with those who are homeless, refugees, or carrying some disability.
- Acceptable religion reaches out to people in their needs – we can be pious in our faith and not see the physical acts that are needed before us – but if we are, then we will fall into the trap that James warns us against here.
- James will use Chapter 2 to go into more detail.

### **1:27b            Heart – keep oneself from being polluted by the world**

- And finally Verse 27 – keep your *heart* from being polluted by the world.
- So much of what should be coming out of us, can be blackened and damaged by what we allow to go into us.
- James wants those who have the word of truth within to do what they can to protect that word so that it won't become corrupted.
- What we watch on TV, what we read in the papers or in books, what we listen to in the media, what we indulge in on the internet, what we celebrate in our downtime, what we embrace when we socialise – all can easily run the risk of polluting our hearts.
- James says keep your heart pure – and he will use Chapter 4 to go into more detail
  
- Live the word - watch your mouth, use your hands and protect your heart.

## **Close**

- And the boss returns – he looks around, and sees his church. He knows how we have used our mouths, he has seen how we have used our hands, he knows what we have feed upon in our hearts.
- 'How friends, have you obeyed what I have asked of you? How friends, have you used the time I have given you? How friends, have you responded to the word I have given you and which I know you have sent time delving into?
- How blessed should you be?

**Talk – James 1:9-27 – Hearing with your Hands**

---

**Closing Prayer**

*Dear Lord and Father,*

*Accept the Word – quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry*

*Obey the Word – practice what we believe*

*Live the Word - watch our mouths, use our hands and protect our heart.*

*Because of Jesus*

**AMEN**