

## Audio file

[\(Study 15\) 2726gsm\\_james\\_1\\_v21-23.mp3](#)

## Transcript

00:00:00

Turning this morning in the Scriptures to James chapter 1, James chapter 1, and reading from verse 21.

00:00:12

James chapter 1 and verse 21.

00:00:18

Let us hear the word of God.

00:00:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness

00:00:29

the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

00:00:34

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

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For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.

00:00:49

For beholdeth he himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man

00:00:58

he was.

00:01:00

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed, in his actions.

00:01:14

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but perceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

00:01:25

pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

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The Lord will bless his word to our hearts.

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Now our focus this morning will be on James chapter 1 and verses 21

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and to 23.

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So James chapter 1 verses 21 to 23.

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But let me begin with a question.

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Perhaps a multiple choice.

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Sometimes it's good to have a multiple choice.

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Some of us know what it is to wrestle with multiple choices.

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But here's one.

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Out of these three important means of grace,

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Which one would you prioritize?

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Let me begin like this.

00:02:26

Prayer, reading the Word of God, or fellowship?

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Prayer, reading the Word of God, or fellowship?

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I know some might say, Prayer.

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Prayer is speaking to God.

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Others might say, Well, it's good to meet with other believers.

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But notice James's priority.

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And indeed, the Bible prioritizes the Word of God above prayer.

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You might be surprised at that.

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Why?

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Prayer is speaking to God, addressing God.

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Surely that's so important.

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Ah, but the Word of God teaches us that God is addressing us.

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And see, James takes this priority and teaches us something this morning, and the title of our message is, Hearing and Receiving God's Word.

00:03:38

Or I could put it, Hearing and Heeding God's Word.

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But let's go with hearing and receiving.

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Here we are under the Word of God.

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But how do we listen?

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Or perhaps I should begin by saying, are we listening?

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Are we listening for the Word of God?

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One of the great challenges of an expository preacher is not only to explain God's Word, but to apply God's Word.

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To apply it not only generally, but specifically.

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not only to older adults, but younger adults, to children, and right across the age spectrum, to young Christians and to older believers.

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The man of God cannot do this without the help and work of the Holy Spirit.

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That's why prayer is so important in preparing for the ministry of the Word, both for the hearer and for the preacher.

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Now, last week, if you remember, we looked at three things.

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We found these truths, this life verse, as I entitled it, in verse 19, Be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.

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And if you remember, I entitled it, Be quick to listen, be slow to speak, be slow to anger.

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And we looked at four types of disposition of a person.

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We had the easily angered and the easily pacified.

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The second group was the easily angered and the difficult to calm down.

00:05:22

The third group was those not easily angered and easy to calm down.

00:05:26

And the fourth group was the slow to anger and hard to pacify or hard to calm down.

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And what does that have to do with the Word of God?

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Well, it's very important that we realize that our emotions

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can affect how we hear God's Word.

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One man summarizes like this, A Christian should be much more ready to listen than to speak, slow to get angry.

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If we are believers, then we have to work to do, clearing out the weeds of wickedness and anger from the ground of our lives, and having the Word of God planted in our souls.

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So really this morning what I'm going to do is look at these verses, and the first point is this.

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Take heed how we hear God's word.

00:06:16

Take heed how we hear God's word.

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Notice what James says in verse 21, Wherefore lay apart all not filthiness and superfluity of a naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your soul.

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In the original language, James is being very emphatic here.

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He says, Put away, lay aside, do not take this with you.

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The picture here is of someone who has decided that they're going to try and follow God's word, but they're going to take something with them.

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James is very clear here.

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He doesn't mince his words.

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He's almost

00:07:08

as perceptive as the Apostle Paul or even the Lord Jesus Christ.

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He doesn't deal in niceties.

00:07:17

He says, lay apart.

00:07:19

Do you remember what Peter said?

00:07:24

Putting away.

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Therefore, all wickedness, all guile, hypocrisies, envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the milk of the Word of God.

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That's First Peter chapter two, verse one.

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Or the Apostle Paul in Hebrews chapter 12 tells us to

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Lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

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Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1, The sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience, the race set before us.

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So that's the first important thing.

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Leave it aside, lay it aside.

00:08:12

Don't keep it with you.

00:08:15

What are we to lay aside?

00:08:16

Well, James is very clear here.

00:08:19

He talks about lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.

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This word filthiness means dirty, vile, unclean.

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It speaks of an inward filthiness, not an outward filthiness.

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It's not to do with our dirt on our clothes.

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It's to do with the uncleanness in our hearts, which are laid aside.

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In the New Testament, this can be rendered as filth.

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It speaks of an evil conduct that is disgusting or offensive.

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And you might think, Well, why does James do this?

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Because the Holy Spirit knows right well that a generation will be raised up who will not do this.

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When they're listening for the Word of God, they will not lay aside these things.

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We live in a generation where Christians are confused over their conduct, young Christians, their conduct before marriage.

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There are famous people who've come on and proclaimed that they were involved in certain activities that are only preserved for marriage.

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These are professing Christians.

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So lay it aside, friends, put it away.

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But James goes one more.

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In order he speaks about the filthiness, he speaks about superfluity of naughtiness.

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What is superfluity?

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Well, it's an old word, as you might expect.

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It's from the word superfluous.

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It means to be excessive or to be over and above.

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It speaks of plentifulness and abundance.

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Perhaps the best picture I could think of was of a river in full spate, a large river in full spate, and it's overflowing its banks.

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And it's actually in danger of damaging property and even life.

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And that's the idea here that James is using.

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The word fluid comes from this word, fluid.

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And it speaks of this overflowingness.

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But it's also used in a positive way.

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In Romans chapter 5, verse 17, it speaks of an abundance of grace.

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And in 2 Corinthians, Paul 8, verse 2, Paul says, An abundance of joy.

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It's superfluous.

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This is a word that's so rich.

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Yes, in this context, it's got a negative connotation.

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But in other places, it's got a positive connotation.

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Isn't it marvelous?

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The same word can be used in two different ways.

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And oh, I trust that each one of us would rather be overflowing with abundance of grace and joy than overflowing with naughtiness and filthiness.

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I remember as a boy, my grandma used to say to me, stop being naughty.

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She had three grandsons, and we were all quite naughty.

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But we weren't as naughty as James is outlining here.

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We had a naughty spirit.

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We were certainly a handful, if I can put it that way.

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And if some of us grew up in homes where there was more than one boy, it certainly was a handful.

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But the naughtiness here speaks of something deep, something ingrained.

00:12:02

And oh, it wouldn't be wonderful if more believers were to prove their conversion and prove their salvation by leaving aside the filthiness and the naughtiness of the old life.

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Well, why is this harmful to the Christian?

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Because there's something stopping us.

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from hearing or receiving or heeding the Word of God.

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Perhaps you could think of a blockage, a plumbing blockage, not a personal blockage.

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Perhaps you've got one of these sinks that's always getting clogged up with all kinds of morass of stuff, hairs and all kinds of things.

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I won't go into the details.

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You can imagine if you're a plumber, you'll know what this is like.

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You call them fat balls.

00:13:02

You call them borgs, all kinds of things.

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And this is a blockage that's stopping the water flowing and flowing freely.

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You can imagine a drain pipe outside your house and you have to get somebody to clean out the drain pipe.

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Then the water, the rain, will come on the roof and then flow down the roof and into the guttering and down the drying pipe.

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And is it not similar when it comes to the Word of God?

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What's blocking God's Word from having an effect upon our hearts?

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What is it?

00:13:41

A word here for naughtiness speaks of anger.

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But it also speaks of frustration.

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It speaks of wrath.

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It speaks of lots of different ways.

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It speaks really to the mental capacity.

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What's stopping us hearing, or better, heeding the Word of God?

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I'll deal with hearing and listening in a moment.

00:14:09

What is it, friends?

00:14:10

The Holy Spirit will show us something that's stopping us doing this.

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to hearing God's Word.

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It's one thing to sit under God's Word.

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It's quite another thing to receive God's Word.

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Perhaps it's ourselves.

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Perhaps it's not something wicked in us.

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It's just an unbelief.

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Perhaps we haven't been involved in something wicked or naughty or filthy.

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It can't be said for everyone.

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But perhaps it's a resistance to God Himself.

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Whatever it is, may the Lord show you what that blockage is, and may the Word of God come freely to you.

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But there's a second thing I want us to think about.

00:15:02

The first thing must take heed how we hear.

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It really addresses the attitude of heart and mind.

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Secondly, take heed it is the Word of God.

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It is the word of God.

00:15:12

Notice what James says, Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your soul.

00:15:23

The Bible is described in many ways in the Old Testament.

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You read through the Psalm of old Psalm, Psalm 119, 176 verses.

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And there are many words used to describe the Word of God.

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There's just a few.

00:15:42

The law, the precepts, the statutes, the commandments of God.

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I find it fascinating that the longest psalm in the Bible is not about prophecy.

00:15:59

It's about the Word of God.

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It centers on Scripture.

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All those stanzas, 22 of them, reflect something of the Word of God, its nature, its character.

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Theologians use different ways to describe the Word of God or to show the characteristics of the Word of God.

00:16:21

They speak about the inspiration of Scripture.

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You find this in 2 Timothy 3, All Scripture is inspired or literally breathed out by God.

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When you're holding the Word of God in your hands, we're not just reading or even hearing or even thinking about some book, some words on a page.

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We're actually holding and handling the Word of God.

00:16:48

There's another word used, infallible.

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God's Word is without error.

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It's interesting how in times past, certain unbelievers

00:17:03

had ways of discounting the word of God and said, Some of these old tribes, they didn't exist, until another piece of the earth in the Middle East was dug up and more proof was found to prove that certain ancient tribes actually did live, and one of them was the Hittites.

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So inspired, infallible,

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How about a simple word, trustworthy?

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Trustworthy.

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You mean this whole book is trustworthy?

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Yes.

00:17:42

Because it's from a God whom we can trust.

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No, man's word is so shaky.

00:17:51

Man's promises come and go.

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Not just politicians make promises that are empty, but so many others make promises that are empty.

00:18:03

God's word is true, reliable.

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There's another word that comes to mind, sufficient.

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God covers every experience that a Christian or person could experience, not just a Christian but a non-Christian.

00:18:21

And he deals with them in so many ways.

00:18:24

And one text of Scripture will affect us, one person in one way, and the same text of Scripture will affect another person in a different way.

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It's sufficient.

00:18:40

Think of depression for a Christian.

00:18:43

Does God's Word deal with depression?

00:18:45

Yes.

00:18:48

Yes, friends.

00:18:51

You read through the Psalms and you find that the Psalmist is

00:18:54

is in great difficulty and depression.

00:18:56

You read of Elijah, and he's at the end of himself.

00:18:59

You read of Jeremiah.

00:19:02

God's word is sufficient.

00:19:04

There's so many ways you could describe God's word, but what does James focus on?

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He doesn't speak about any of those things.

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He speaks about the engrafting.

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or ingrafted word.

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This word is an interesting word.

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It could speak of implanted, which you find the same word in Matthew 15, verse 13 and 1 Corinthians 3, verse 6.

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Or it could be the word rooted.

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Find that in...

00:19:45

James 1, verse 18, that word begat could be speak of rooted.

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Or Matthew 13, verses 3 to 2, sorry, verses 2 to 3, which speaks of the soil or the garden, that soil of the heart.

00:20:02

And God compares the heart of men and women and children to gardens, where the Word of God is sown or implanted.

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In the original language, this word has the picture of a pointed incision needed to bring forth fruit.

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In Romans, we speak of the church being engrafted into the vine.

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It's a gospel word.

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We're all engrafted into the true vine, Jesus Christ.

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So we are not only engrafted, but all the life that Christ has flows through us.

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This engrafted word.

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Who did it?

00:20:59

We didn't engraft it in ourselves.

00:21:02

God did it.

00:21:05

But how should we receive this word?

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Well, it should be received with meekness.

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By the way, meekness doesn't mean weakness.

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Weakness, meekness means humility.

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Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of His service as those who are, He's meek and humble of heart, meek and gentle of heart.

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Our Lord Jesus wasn't weak, He was humble.

00:21:37

He was humble as He went about His service for the Lord, for His Father, Heavenly Father.

00:21:45

Humility.

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In other words, the attitude of saying, I don't know everything, Lord.

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Let's put it very simply.

00:21:54

I don't understand everything, Lord.

00:21:57

In fact, the more I read of Your Word, Lord, the less I really understand.

00:22:02

That's the true respect that we have for the Word of God.

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Oh yes, we understand the main things, but there's such deep truths here that it would take 3 lifetimes.

00:22:12

to unpack them, and we may not get to the end of them then.

00:22:18

What a thing it is to have the Word of God and to know that the God who gave us His Word and engrafted His Word into our souls delights to teach us.

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We should be humble, but why?

00:22:34

James tells us it will save our souls.

00:22:39

Well, you could apply this in two ways.

00:22:40

You could apply it, first of all, to the unbeliever.

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What does the unbeliever need?

00:22:46

To hear, to be saved.

00:22:55

He or she must hear the word of God.

00:23:00

And you might say, Well, that means preachers are not necessary.

00:23:04

Well, in some ways,

00:23:06

And the Lord can't work outside of preaching.

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He chooses to ordinarily use preaching.

00:23:15

But there are times, and I know one or two of my friends who were converted through meeting a Christian, and that was it.

00:23:22

And the Christian took them under their wing and explained to them the Bible.

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But you notice the important thing, the Bible.

00:23:32

There's another man I know, and he was converted through reading the Word of God alone.

00:23:39

God's not limited, but in both cases, both individuals were humbled, and they received the engrafted Word of God, and it did save their souls.

00:23:54

When you hear a gospel sermon, you're hearing the Word of God.

00:23:59

And I trust every gospel sermon you will ever hear will have the word of God.

00:24:05

If it doesn't, it's not the word of God.

00:24:08

It's the words of men.

00:24:13

Can the words of men on their own save a soul?

00:24:17

No.

00:24:17

It's the word of God.

00:24:18

That's why we could apply it to translation work.

00:24:23

Tribes who haven't yet received the word of God, they need the word of God.

00:24:29

So we pray about them.

00:24:32

We're blessed to be able to read God's word in a language we understand, to receive it.

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But are we humbled by it?

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Because not only does it save the soul, it also keeps the soul.

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I remember as a very young man, it was a while ago now,

00:24:58

I was seeking the Lord about a call to the ministry.

00:25:03

And I remember an older preacher taking me under his wing, and he said to me, Young man, you make your home in the Bible, and the Bible will take you home.

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There's such wisdom in that.

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It sounds so simple.

00:25:26

I don't think I've made my home in the Bible yet.

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Perhaps there's many other distractions, but what an encouragement.

00:25:36

And I now say that to young believers.

00:25:39

Make your home in the Bible, and the Bible will take you home.

00:25:44

Not physically, not literally, but will take you to God.

00:25:52

What about the Psalmist and Jeremiah?

00:25:54

Thy word have I hidden in mine heart that I would not sin against thee.

00:26:01

Oh, that it will be engrafted in us and it would keep us.

00:26:10

Steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fasten to the rock which cannot move, ground it deep and firm in the Saviour's love.

00:26:22

Oh, it's lovely to have thoughts of Christ.

00:26:26

It's lovely to have the reality of Christ at work in our lives by His Spirit.

00:26:30

But it's also important to have the Word of God residing, abiding, living, breathing.

00:26:39

By the way, the Word of God is compared to a living Word.

00:26:44

It's a sharp sword, not a blunt knife.

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The Word of God has an impact upon the mind, the heart, the will, the soul, and the conscience.

00:26:58

The Word of God pierces down to the very bones and marrows to the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

00:27:05

The Word of God is rich, plentiful, so much depth to it, and yet even a young child can

00:27:18

Read the Word of God on His mother's or father's knee and understand some of it.

00:27:26

When the Word of God is sown in a heart, do not despair.

00:27:32

God's Spirit can bring life to that Word many, many years later.

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I'll just remind you of one other example that comes to mind.

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I was preaching in a church many, many years ago.

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it's not that long ago, really.

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It's only about 10 years ago.

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But I was going to say this man had grown up in church.

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Heard the Bible taught, went to Sunday school, learned his catechism.

00:28:01

It was further south.

00:28:02

It wasn't in Scotland.

00:28:04

He went to a very good church.

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His parents were Christians.

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I knew of them.

00:28:08

I didn't know them.

00:28:10

And one night he turned up at a church I was preaching in.

00:28:15

I didn't know him.

00:28:17

And he didn't know me.

00:28:19

And he said to me, Young man, I've just come back to the Lord.

00:28:27

And he told me his story over a cup of coffee.

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And he said, You see this lady here?

00:28:32

This is my childhood sweetheart.

00:28:35

And we escaped from the church and ran away from God and had a very enjoyable life, and he was very wealthy, he had done very well for himself.

00:28:46

But he said, I could not get out of my mind that God's word that I had learned as a boy.

00:28:57

And his wife also had grown up in a Christian home, and she had heard texts from Scripture.

00:29:02

But what was it that brought them back?

00:29:06

Well, they were in a town one day, a much larger town, and there was a man out giving out leaflets.

00:29:16

And they received this leaflet, and they went home and read it.

00:29:24

What did the leaflet contain?

00:29:26

It contained a gospel message with the word of God.

00:29:34

Take heed how we hear God's word.

00:29:37

Take heed that it is God's word.

00:29:41

Thirdly,

00:29:42

Take note the difference between hearing and listening.

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We get very practical here.

00:29:47

What is the difference?

00:29:49

Are they not the same?

00:29:51

Can you not say, Well, I can hear God's word or listen to God's word?

00:29:55

They're all the one.

00:29:56

We live in such a day when terms are confused and meanings are lost.

00:30:04

Well, let me try and help here.

00:30:06

Hearing

00:30:08

is the involuntary, physical, continuous process of perceiving sound waves through your ears.

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That sounds very technical, doesn't it?

00:30:17

Let me give you an example.

00:30:19

You're in your office and you're hearing the radio, or you're hearing music.

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You're not really focusing on the words or on the melody, you're just hearing it.

00:30:35

You're in a supermarket.

00:30:37

And there's that piped music, they call it, broadcast in the supermarket.

00:30:44

In the mornings, it's much quieter, much softer, because they want you to stay around.

00:30:50

In the afternoon, it speeds up.

00:30:51

Did you ever notice this?

00:30:52

There is a theory.

00:30:54

There is a plan in all this.

00:30:56

But you're just hearing this noise or this music.

00:31:00

It's just there.

00:31:04

If you're in a quiet office,

00:31:06

and everybody's busy working, you may even have the air conditioning on.

00:31:12

And if the air conditioning is on, it's a word in the background, but you don't quite pay attention to it.

00:31:17

It's there.

00:31:18

It's somewhere out there.

00:31:20

Listening is different.

00:31:23

Listening is a voluntary, active mental process.

00:31:29

It involves focusing our attention to understand, interpret, and respond to these sounds, and that's the difference.

00:31:39

Some of us love classical music, and we have a particular piece that comes on, and we stop whatever we're doing.

00:31:47

Maybe it's because it's got some, I don't know, sentimental reason.

00:31:53

But you listen to it and you know where the next phrase is going to go in the piece.

00:32:00

That's listening.

00:32:03

Sometimes in church, we can be hearing God's Word and even hearing the reading of it, and perhaps even just hearing the preaching of it.

00:32:17

And other times, we're listening.

00:32:21

We're listening.

00:32:23

We're actively evolved.

00:32:25

We're thinking, How does this apply to me?

00:32:31

We're focused.

00:32:33

We're listening intently.

00:32:35

We don't need to turn our ears like a dog turns their ears to hear the sound more acutely.

00:32:43

But it's like this.

00:32:46

Somebody's sharing, maybe somebody very close to us, a family member or a friend of a sad story.

00:32:53

We're listening so carefully to each detail.

00:32:58

How does this help us?

00:32:59

Well, take heed that it's God's word and take heed that there's hearing and listening.

00:33:03

How can this be practically applied?

00:33:05

Well, first of all, listen carefully.

00:33:09

Some of us hear God's word, but we don't actually pay attention to it.

00:33:13

We're all guilty of that.

00:33:15

Secondly, remember it.

00:33:18

Remember it.

00:33:20

Read it again later.

00:33:22

And if you know there's going to be an expository series, read in advance.

00:33:28

Read in advance.

00:33:30

Third, think about it later.

00:33:33

And this isn't just say, oh, yeah, that was a nice message.

00:33:36

But think about what you heard, what you listened for, what the Lord spoke to you about.

00:33:42

And He does speak to us in different ways from different sermons.

00:33:47

If I asked each person to write down something of a summary of what you hear in the sermons, it'd be very interesting to see the summaries.

00:33:58

One thing that we've all not really focused on, sadly, today is meditation upon God's Word.

00:34:04

Not just reading it, not just understanding it, but meditating on it, chewing over it.

00:34:15

One man puts it like this, Meditation over the word of God is one of the most important and of all the means of grace and growth and spirituality in Christianity.

00:34:24

Yet there can be no true progress in vital and practical godliness without it.

00:34:33

So the first thing is take heed how we hear God's word, take heed.

00:34:36

Secondly, take heed is the word of God.

00:34:38

Third, take note the difference between hearing and listening.

00:34:41

And finally, and very briefly, take heed how we apply God's word.

00:34:46

We'll come back to this next week.

00:34:48

But notice with me verse 23, or sorry, verse 22, Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

00:34:57

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer only,

00:35:01

He is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass.

00:35:08

We'll come back to this next week, but this is the burden of James's letter, James's epistle.

00:35:14

If you read through the whole of James, this is his burden.

00:35:18

Don't just hear God's word, but apply it.

00:35:25

Apply it, do it.

00:35:31

be doers of the word and not hearers only.

00:35:36

It's quite a remarkable thing how easy it is to hear the word of God, agree with it, assent to it, and even decide to do something about it and not perform it.

00:35:54

We're all guilty of this, but it's the word of God.

00:36:01

That's why application takes a little bit more effort, even for the preacher.

00:36:06

How does this apply?

00:36:07

We'll focus on this next week, but I do want you to notice, be not just a hearer of the word, but a doer as well.

00:36:17

A doer.

00:36:19

Be active.

00:36:21

Take the word of God.

00:36:22

When the Holy Spirit applies it to your particular situation, act on it, friend.

00:36:33

If the Holy Spirit shows you something in your life that's blocking from hearing God's Word more helpfully or more profitably, then ask the Lord to forgive you of that.

00:36:54

If there's something in your life that's hindering you from seeking the Lord,

00:36:59

and you know the Word of God is true, and you know the Word of God is clear, and ask the Lord for mercy.

00:37:09

So take heed how we hear God's Word.

00:37:12

Take heed.

00:37:13

It is God's Word.

00:37:15

Take heed to listen to the difference between hearing and listening, and finally, take heed how you apply God's Word.

00:37:24

Our gracious God and loving Father, thankful for this morning, bless us, O Lord, help us.

00:37:29

Encourage us and strengthen us.

00:37:31

Guide us and direct us.

00:37:34

Help us, O Lord, to see that hearing thy word is such a privilege, such a blessing.

00:37:41

So many today do not hear God's word.

00:37:44

So help us to not only hear it, but to listen carefully for it.

00:37:49

to listen, to remember, and to meditate upon thy word, that we would grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

00:38:01

Help us too, Lord, as those who know the word of God and love the word of God, to share it with others, to tell others of this wonderful truth, that the Bible is God's holy word,

00:38:15

And in it, they will discover so much about God, but also about themselves and the way of salvation through Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

00:38:26

We ask, O Lord, bless each one here this morning for Jesus' sake.

00:38:31

Amen.

