

DEVOTED

“How’s My Hearing?” James 1:19-25

March 2, 2025

INTRO.: Some of us here have had the privilege of noticing that there are some things that don’t get better as you age. I went to the eye doctor this past week because I noticed my glasses didn’t seem to work as well as they used to, and I hadn’t had my eyes tested in a long time. Can you believe that after sitting in the chair and having my eyes examined the doctor concluded my vision had gotten worse? Unbelievable! I need new lenses to do some of the things as well as I used to do them. I’m pretty sure my hearing hasn’t gotten better either as I’ve gotten older. Yet, if a person knows Christ as their Savior and Lord their spiritual hearing can get better as they mature in the faith. The question we want to look at this morning is, “How’s My Hearing?” Last week our theme was, “God Hears,” from Psalm 66. The writer of this Psalm begins by describing the awesomeness of God which leads to His adoration of God. Those who have a personal relationship with the Lord should be quick to praise Him. The psalmist also reminds his readers that when we approach God to speak to Him (prayer) that we need to make sure there aren’t any roadblocks to Him hearing. Those hindrances include: Not having a personal relationship with God, unconfessed sin, unforgiveness, wrong motives, how I treat my wife, and not asking according to God’s will. He concludes the psalm with this assurance:

Psalm 66:18-20 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

How does knowing God hears me affect my hearing as it relates to God and others? We’re going to spend most of our time in James 1:19-25 which we’re going to read in unison.

James 1:19–20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 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. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

Right before these verses James is speaking about how sin comes about: a person is dragged away by their own evil desires (our sin nature). and enticed (tempted) which leads to sin, and sin ultimately leads to death. Sin never delivers what we think or hope it will deliver. Further on in this epistle James talks about what big trouble our tongue can get us in even though it is so small compared to the rest of our body. He compares it to a bit in a horse’s mouth or a rudder in a ship, both very small but quite able to steer. He also talks of how a small spark can lead to a whole forest being on fire. Keep this in mind as we work our way through this passage. Because God hears me what difference does this make?

James 1:19–20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

“take note of this:” this is a command and literally means, “to know, to understand.” What should a follower of Christ know or understand? The main context of this passage has to do with the Word of God although there are some parallels that can be drawn in our relationships with one another.

BE QUICK TO LISTEN

v. 19-20

“be:” present tense command

“quick:” this is our first response, there’s a sense of immediacy with this word

“to listen:” am I hearing what needs to be heard? As we continue in this section James talks about the Word of God. One of the purposes we should have in gathering together is to listen to the Word of God as it is taught and preached. Listening is an art that is difficult to master.

Simon J. Kistemaker: “Listening is the art of closing one’s mouth and opening one’s ears and heart.”

James not only gives this direction, but he follows that with two more statements.

Be slow to speak

As this relates to the Word of God, take careful effort to listen before we speak. How well can you listen when you're attempting to speak? Anybody here ever say something you regret later? Take some time to read through the book of Proverbs and take note of what the writer has to say about what we say.

Proverbs 10:19 When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

Think of Job's friends. Job had just lost everything including his possessions, and most of all, his family. What was the first thing his friends did?

Job 2:11–13 (NIV84) — **11** When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. **12** When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. **13** Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

The problem came when they started to talk and presumed they had all the answers as to why Job was going through all these trials and losses. Note Job's response:

Job 13:5 If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.

When someone comes to faith in Christ He changes our conversation, how we speak to one another. We are to give careful thought about what we have to say before we say it.

Be slow to become angry

Sometimes, if we don't like what we read or hear from the Bible, we resist it and even become angry towards God.

Notice that he doesn't say that we are never to be angry. We are to be angry at the things that anger God. How much of our anger fits that description? Think about the last argument you had with your spouse, parent, child, or friend. How well did you listen? How much of your time was spent thinking about the next great point you were going to make to support your case, at the same time the other person is speaking?

When a fellow brother or sister in Christ comes to us with a concern about something we've done, said, attitude we've displayed, or a some other concern they have do we listen, or do we defend? I have come to learn that the best thing I can do when approached with one of these concerns is to listen, thank them for coming, make sure i understand their concern and let them know I will pray about it and get back to them.

Why be "slow to become angry?"

"for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

God wants to transform our lives. Earlier this week I heard a speaker say: God does not want to reform people; He wants to transform them.

Romans 12:1–2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. **2** Do not conform (present, middle or passive, imperative) any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed (present, passive, imperative) by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve (present tense) what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

v. 21

James 1:21 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.

Take note of the contrasts in this verse:

"get rid of"

"humbly accept"

"all moral filth and the evil so prevalent" *"the Word planted in you"*

This is the "put off" and "put on" that must take place in the believer's life. The idea of "*get rid of*" means to lay it aside. We are to lay aside all the *moral filth and evil which is so prevalent*. This tells me that it is not hard to find.

Ephesians 4:22–24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:8–10 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9** Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Yet, it is not enough to get rid of all this evil and moral filth we need to put something in its place.

“humbly accept:” this is the only command in this verse and it means to welcome or to receive. We need humility when coming to God’s Word because every one of us needs to be taught. To live a godly life is supernatural, to live a sinful life is natural.

“the word planted in you:” God’s Word is to take root in our lives. We have some farmers in this church who grow crops: soybean and corn to name a few of the crops. When you plant the seed what do you hope and pray will happen? God wants His Word to take root in our hearts and change our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

How does God’s Word get planted into our hearts? We need to read, study, memorize, and meditate on it, and share it with others. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to teach us as we open the Bible. Once again, we are also reminded of the importance of our weekly gathering of the body of Christ.

Why does James say it is so important to listen to God’s Word?

“which is able to save you:” “able” is a present tense participle

Romans 10:17 (NASB95) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

AM I HEARING?

v. 22-24

James makes it clear that it is not enough just to listen to God’s Word. We need to do something about it!

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

It literally means, *“be doers of the word:”* “be” is a present tense command. We are to continually be doers of the Word. To listen to God’s Word and not do it, we are *“deceiving”* ourselves. This also is a present tense.

Illustration of listening but not doing:

James 1:23-24 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

“looks:” to look at, to stare (this is not a casual glance)

A few weeks ago, one of our dogs got up on the bed and looked in the mirror and began barking like crazy. He didn’t like having another dog in the bedroom, particularly a dog he didn’t know or one he thought he didn’t know. He didn’t realize that dog he was looking at was him. If we listen to the Word of God and don’t do what it says, its like looking in a mirror and not remembering what you see.

What do we know about a mirror? It’s going to tell you like it is. As you and I look in a mirror, what we see is us. It’s not another person. It will also point out what we need to change. If I look in the mirror and see that my hair is messed up, I have a decision to make. I can pretend it’s fine, and I would only be fooling myself or I can get a comb out and fix it. My solution to this type of dilemma is to get it cut short enough I don’t have to comb it.

You and I cannot expect God's blessing if we don't do what God's Word tells us to do. We can't do what it says without God's power working in our lives. The Bible is not a self-help book. When a person gives their life to Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer, teaching them God's Word as it is read and providing the strength to obey it.

In John 10 Jesus talks about the shepherd and the sheep and the relationship between the two of them. I want us to turn there for a few minutes as there (page 1666 in the pew Bible) are some themes that are repeated.

John 10:3–4 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

John 10:16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Common themes:

- *The shepherd knows the sheep
- *The sheep know the shepherd
- *The sheep listen to the shepherd
- *The sheep follow the shepherd

Key verbs:

- "*know*:" present tense
- "*listen*:" present tense (future tense in verse 16)
- "*follow*:" present tense

Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd in this chapter. He knows His sheep fully. Who are His sheep? It's all those who have come to know Him as Savior and Lord. He knows His sheep better than the sheep know themselves. What are the characteristics of these sheep? They listen (ongoing, continual listening) and they follow (ongoing, continual). Sheep get in serious trouble very quickly when they stop following the shepherd. Sheep **MUST** follow the shepherd to survive, for their well-being. It is no different for the child of God. Someone doesn't come to know the Good Shepherd and then proceed to do their own thing.

Practical tips on being a good listener of God's Word and of people:

- Freedom from distractions
- Take time
- Ask questions (looking for answers)
- Making sure you hear correctly (reread the Scripture)
- Eye contact (concentration)
- Having a right relationship
- Ask how you're doing with your listening

SO WHAT???

- *Take time to listen to God
- *Record what I am learning/ what the passage says (our time with God is not just an assignment to buzz through)
- *Be accountable to someone (another man if you're a man, another woman if you're a woman)
- *Ask someone you interact with regularly how you're doing with listening to them