

Did You Hear That?? **James 1:18-25 (NKJV)**

18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. 19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Some people have a problem hearing because they are too busy speaking.

God gave us two ears and one mouth, that should tell us something.

I have a section in my pre-marital counseling that deals with this principle.

You cannot answer the question until you heard it.

I read a story of a student that was always interrupting the speaker to ask questions. And a certain speaker came to speak but before he could begin the student was raising and waving his hand. The speaker simply said would you please allow me to say something before you ask me about what I have said.

But this passage has a much more significant meaning than this.

What is it that we are to be quick to hear?

Well he tells us before this verse and after this verse.

In verse 18 he refers to the word of truth.

In verse 21 he refers to the implanted word.

But notice the rest of the passage.

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So then it is in this vein we will approach the passage today.

I. Swift to hear.

A. Does that sound a little strange?

- B. I understand swift to speak, but we usually think of hearing as a passive thing.
- C. But not so.
 - 1. Many authors have spoken of active listening.
 - 2. God expects us to be active listeners.
 - 3. Ducks like rain and chickens do not.
 - a. It is because the rain just runs off the duck's back but it soaks the chicken to the bone.
 - b. For some people listening to the word of God is like water on a duck's back, it mostly runs right off and none of it ever touches the duck under his downy feathers.
 - c. That is how all lost people are under the word, it just runs right off and they go on unaffected by it.
- D. There must be a desire to hear the word.
 - 1. Just as the servant is quick to hear his master's voice, and the mother to hear her baby's smallest cry, so the believer should be quick to hear what God has to say. *Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 346.*
 - 2. John 10:4–5 (NKJV)
 - a. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”
 - 3. Proverbs 8:34
 - a. Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors.
 - 4. Mark 2:2
 - a. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive [them], not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.
 - 5. Acts 13:42
 - a. So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.
 - 6. Acts 13:48
 - a. Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the

word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

7. Acts 17:11
 - a. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily [to find out] whether these things were so.
 8. 1 Thessalonians 2:13
 - a. For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
 9. Albert Barnes says:
 - a. The connexion is this: "Since God is the only source of good; since he tempts no man; and since by his mere sovereign goodness, without any claim on our part, we have had the high honour conferred on us of being made the first-fruits of his creatures, we ought to be ready to hear his voice, to subdue all our evil passions, and to bring our souls to entire practical obedience." *Albert Barnes* (James 1:19)
- E. In the parable of the sower Jesus likened the word of God to seed to be scattered in the field.
1. Some of the seed fell by the wayside and was consumed by the birds.
 2. Some fell on rocky ground and after sprouting could no longer sustain life for it had no roots.
 3. Some fell among thorns that grew up and choked the life out of the plant and it died.
 4. While other seed fell on the good soil and produced abundantly.
 5. The seed was that same in each case, it is how it was received that made the difference.
- F. We are to be diligent in seeking to know God and it is only in His word that can happen.
- G. After you have been begotten by the Word of God, you are not through with it. You are going to grow by the Word of God. You have something that is living, powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (see Heb. 4:12). "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor.

2:14). *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary: The Epistles (James), electronic ed., vol. 53 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 37.*

H. If the sinner wishes to have life, and the brethren wish to attain to the maturity of Christian manhood, "let every man be swift to hear." I fear that our times have produced a pace so fast and a multiplicity of attractions so appealing that men are not ready and eager to avail themselves of the many opportunities of increasing their acquaintance with the "Word of truth." *Lehman Strauss, Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 50.*

II. Slow to speak.

A. Matthew 12:36-37 (NKJV)

1. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

B. Proverbs 10:19 (NKJV)

1. 19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

C. Don't we often come to God's Word looking to justify ourselves? We're like people in an argument who are not really listening to one another, but instead we're consumed with formulating what we're going to say in response. We are not quick to hear and slow to speak but loathe to listen and anxious to argue. *David Platt, – Exalting Jesus In James: Christ-Centered Exposition, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, Tony Merida, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2014), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 16.*

D. Every Christian will freely admit that his greatest problem in living the Christian life is being consistently obedient to what he knows to be the clear teaching of God's Word. Sins against 'light'—what we know to be true—are a vastly greater problem than sins of ignorance. *Gordon Keddie, Welwyn Commentary Series – The Practical Christian: James simply explained, (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 1989), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 64.*

E. When we plan to do or say something, we ought to ask whether our actions and words promote the honor of God and advance the cause of justice and peace for our fellow man. *Simon J. Kistemaker, Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1986), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 57.*

F. A wise man will listen to others and answer only if he is certain he has something worthwhile to say. *Lehman Strauss, Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers,*

1967), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 51.

James begins with a single, attention-getting Greek word: *Iste* (know!), translated "take note of this." It has the same effect as when we say, "Listen!" before saying something we don't want people to miss. Verse 19 records the theme for the rest of the chapter. Again James reminds his reader that these are family rules of conduct ("dear brothers").

Bruce B. Barton, David R. Veerman, Neil Wilson, *Life Application Bible Commentary – James*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 30.

A well-known evangelical chorus gives voice to this unscriptural aspiration:

At the cross, at the cross,
Where I first saw the light
And the burden of my sins fell away.
It was there by faith I received my sight
And now I am happy all the day.

The whole chorus is a regrettably trite expression of what it means to be converted to Christ. The last line, however, offers a positively misleading impression about the Christian life—one which has been productive of great evils in many a Christian's thought and practice. It is a short hop from the idea that I ought to be happy all the time to the notion that whatever keeps me happy is all right with God.

Gordon Keddie, Welwyn Commentary Series – The Practical Christian: James simply explained, (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 1989), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 65.

the point being that the Word of God must first be heard before anyone can respond in faith to its claims. *Gordon Keddie, Welwyn Commentary Series – The Practical Christian: James simply explained*, (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 1989), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 66.

You can't be listening to the right things, if you waste your attention on unprofitable things. *Gordon Keddie, Welwyn Commentary Series – The Practical Christian: James simply explained*, (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 1989), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 67.