# Introduction

**Illustration: Difference between information for a test vs. for your life.**
A **history teacher** who gives a bunch of facts and then tells us to listen because…it will be on the test!
So then the action is to remember for the sake of a test.
VS.
If you were standing in a plane with a **parachute**, and the **instructor** was teaching you.
Why are you listening? Because you are about to use that truth!
If you do not listen to the history teacher, it will be revealed on your report card; if you don't listen to the parachute instructions, it will be revealed by the speed at which your body hits the ground.

In a unique way, the book of James pushes back against a church culture that has drifted into believing the Gospel is meant only to be understood for the test to come.

- A culture that believes that right answers make us righteous.

And James says the Gospel is a truth to be received and trusted in this life.

- And our daily lives will reveal whether we have received that truth in faith.
- That the goal is not simply knowing a truth, but rather in LIVING a Truth.

A summary statement that came out of the Reformation says that "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone"

The overarching argument is that the faith that saves will, in fact, produce works that declare it.

And this is what we will see in our passage this morning:

**Stand and read - James 1:22-25**
**Pray**

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## Purpose Statement

Having received Christ as our Lord and Savior, our doing (life) will therefore be shaped by the blessed truth we now trust.

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To support this summary statement of God's Word, we will look at the following arguments:

1. The Deception of Hearing
2. The Logic of Seeing
3. The Blessing of Doing

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# **Point 1:** The Deception of Hearing

Summary Statement
We deceive ourselves if we believe salvation is by understanding and not true faith.

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## The Implanted Word!

Verse: 22, James writes:

**[22] But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

James says, Do the Word, because if you are just a hearer of the word and not a doer, you are deceiving yourself!

But deceiving ourselves of what? We see the "what" in the previous verse:

**James 1:21**
[21] Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to save your souls.

**The deception in question is in the humble receiving of the implanted word.**

The Greek word for "**implanted"** carries the weight of something inborn.

- And see in vs 21 what the result of receiving this word is: **the salvation of our souls**.
- So then, based on the results, the "implanted word" must be the Gospel, since it alone is the cause and power to save our souls.

Jeremiah prophesied of this in Jeremiah 31 in the prophecy of the New Covenant.

**Jeremiah 31:33**
[33] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and **I will write it on their hearts**. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**James 1:21** is referring to this prophesied work of God in writing His new Covenant Law on our hearts.

And so again, to sum up what we read last week, in order to better understand this week and the rest of the book of James…
When the Spirit of God speaks to us through His Word,
and we see the gracious conviction of God,
and we're slow to speak, that is, defend our own righteousness, because, as we know,
that angry defensive posture of fear cannot produce the righteousness of God,
and instead we humbly receive the implanting of the Word of Christ on our hearts,
our souls are saved.

Again, this is important for the rest of the book of James!

- The book of James can be unjustly characterized as being against Paul's theology.
- And we see clearly here that it is not!
- What saves your souls?
- What is the power of God for your salvation?

**Before James addresses the necessity of the "doing" of a Christian, he writes, " What is able to save you is in the humble reception of the Word of Christ that God Himself plants.**

- That's the reality of the New Covenant that Jeremiah foretold, and James now "forthtells."
- That gracious work of God is how we become a new people.

The arguments that follow in the rest of his letter are the outworkings of this salvation that we have received from God in Christ Jesus.

## The Misunderstanding of Understanding

**And then we read this in vs 22:**

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

So with all that we just read, the self-deception is thinking we are saved simply by hearing and understanding the Gospel.

- That the power of the Gospel is found in our ability to comprehend its truths.

**Illustration: The Power of the Medicine**
If you spend your entire life learning about a medicine that has the ability to save you, and you refuse to take it, that medicine has no power for you.
But if you do take it, that power will be made manifest in you.
You will see the effects of having taken it.

So James is saying that doing the word reveals that we have received the word.

- And of course we must first understand the Gospel!
  - But the Gospel is not a theological test we pass to get salvation.
  - To believe that our understanding of the Gospel is the power of God to save us is the great deception.
  - The Good News of Jesus Christ must, yes, be understood, but also, it must be trusted and therefore received for it to have its effect on our souls.

And its effect on our souls is the death of the old man, and the birth of the new man who is aimed at obedience to the new way of life.

**Faith is not an academic endeavor of comprehension.**

- It's a Spirit-wrought gracious work in us, by which we come to personally know and **trust** Jesus.

And this saving faith, or receiving of the Gospel, will in fact produce the works of salvation in and through us!

Its power will begin to be revealed in the Already, and then fully revealed in the Not Yet.

## Not BY Works, but FOR works

**Before we move on, let's briefly look at Paul's famous statement about our salvation.**
**Ephesians 2:8–10**
[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
[9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**And we stand with Paul, and say, it is not of our own doing!**

- It is a gift of God!
- We have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!
- Yes and Amen!

**And also,** Paul goes on to say this in the very next verse: that this gracious salvation by faith in Christ will in fact produce something visible!

[10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Created in Christ FOR GOOD WORKS that we should walk in them.**
**Again, Good Works are not the cause of our salvation, but they are the result of our salvation.**

- **Our faith has consequences!**
  - Good works declare the dawn of the new creation of God in Christ Jesus!

And here in the book of James, he echoes these things by saying it is by receiving the implanted Gospel of God that we are saved, and that salvation unto new life will, in fact, be seen in the works of the new life.

Summary Statement
We deceive ourselves if we believe salvation is by understanding and not true faith.

**Transition:**
And so, as if James knew there would be all sorts of questions and arguments about what he is saying, he then turns to a logical word picture.

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# **Point 2:** The Logic of Seeing

Summary Statement
To “see” what the Gospel has revealed and receive it will lead to living it out.

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## An Absurd Word Picture

**To make this clear, James uses a word picture. He writes:**

[23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. [24] For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

**An ancient mirror could not be glanced at; you would have to look closely and consider.**

- And if you took the time to look closely at this polished metal, saw dirt on your face, and didn’t remove it, that would be very strange.

This is meant to be absurd.

- Since we have clear mirrors and they are easy to glance at, maybe a better way to understand the absurdity here is to consider:
  - If you were on the first floor of a 3-story building, nd you wanted to see if you had anything on your face, and the only mirror was on the third story, it would be strange if you took the time to climb the stairs and then see the dirt and do nothing about it.
- And to think about it another way, if you see someone with dirt all over their face, you would assume they have NOT looked in a mirror, because if they had…

## Tree and Its Fruit

And as we have continually seen, James draws from the teaching of Jesus.
In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says

**Matthew 7:15–20**
[15] “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [16] You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? [17] So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. [18] A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (ESV)

**Jesus said that FALSE prophets will be recognized by their fruit.**
That EVERY healthy tree doesn’t just NOT bear bad fruit; it bears Good Fruit.

- And that true and false prophets are recognized by what they do, not simply the thing they said, or what they comprehend.
- And the trees that don’t bear good fruit are thrown into the fire.

And the logic is clear here!
The fruit tree is logically revealed by its fruit.

And don't miss it: the orange tree does not BECOME an orange tree by bearing oranges! Rather, the oranges reveal what kind of tree it already is.

So…the fruit we bear does not cause our souls to be saved; rather, it reveals if we have humbly received the implanted Word of resurrection power.

## Sand and Slab

Jesus goes on to say in the Sermon on the Mount that:

**Matthew 7:24–27**
[24] "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

In this word picture, Jesus uses a more catastrophic example.
He says that EVERYONE who ignores, that is, everyone who is a hearer only and not a doer of His words and builds their lives on the word of man is like a fool who built his home on sand.

- They should not be surprised that when the storm comes, great is their fall!

**And again, the logic of the word picture is very clear.**

- The inborn Word of Christ absolutely has implications in this life.
  - The storm reveals the foundation.
  - ONCE AGAIN, the security of the house is not found in the person's workmanship of the building; it is secured by the foundation of what it is built upon.

**Transition:**
So then, if we do not want to live out an absurdity, how then should we live?
Which brings us to the final verse of our passage.

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# **Point 3:** The Blessing of Doing

**Verse** -[25] But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

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Summary Statement
In this revelation (manifesting/going public) of WHOM we have received, we will be blessed in the Already and Not Yet

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## The Law of Liberty?

James writes **BUT** the one who does the Law of liberty and acts…will be blessed in His doing.

- The law of liberty we have received in Christ, the new covenant, is a new self that is not captive to the law of death; it is, however, captive to the law of the Spirit.
- It's been set free unto a new relationship with good works of our faith, instead of good works of the law.
- And those good works of the Spirit then testify to the salvation of our souls.

And James says that it is those who walk in the liberty of obeying God's Word, as opposed to walking in the condemnation of God's Word, who will be blessed in their doing.

## Jesus Did the Good Work

**In Hebrews 2:10 we read this:**
[10] For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

The founder of our salvation became perfect through suffering; that is, His office of the Messiah was made full through the doing of the cross.

Jesus finished the work and became our Christ because He did not stay in heaven and shelter himself from suffering.

- When He came to earth, He did not simply teach the truth of salvation; He did the work of salvation.
- And this reinforces James' argument…
  - If Salvation is through hearing and understanding alone, then Jesus would have been made perfect through teaching alone.
  - He did not need to DO suffering.

And I know people can get nervous about sermons that talk about the application of our theology.

- And I understand the hesitation, but my goodness, if Jesus, the Son of God, did not APPLY theology through His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, then none of us, not even Abraham or Moses, would have hope.
  - We would all be blind in the darkness of our hostile minds.
  - We would all be lame in the brokenness of our sin.
  - NO MATTER how much we understood about God and His Son, if Christ did not LIVE out our Salvation, we would have no hope!
  - And Jesus DID NOT DO TRUTH for the sake of the approval of God; He already had that. He DID HIS TRUTH for the sake of the Glory of His Father being revealed, that the world would see that God is Love.

SO! Yes, we are blessed in our doing, **but** we must first see and be secured in the truth that we have been first BLESSED by His doing!

And so THEN, therefore! We have been set free to a life of blessed doing!

## Jesus Commissioned

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We have a bonus slide for this last point, because I want us all to stare at these words of our King.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall receive mercy!

They are blessed in their doing mercy!

**And He goes on to say this: Matthew 5:13–16**

[13] “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.
[14] “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

**To be salt is not simply a seasoning that is sprinkled on things to make them taste better…in the ancient world, it was a preservative against decay.**

- So then, Christ is saying, this earth, this age, is in decay; it is falling apart, and the works of man are works of uncreation.

- Of division, of anger and polarization.
- The fabric of society is being ripped apart.

So then, Church, if I may spend some time calling us to the DOING of our Faith…

- Jesus our Lord and Savior, our Creator and King, said this…
  YOU, WE are the salt of this earth!
- That is not something that is simply meant to be understood…it is a commissioning to something that must be done.
- We are meant to be a preservative in this kingdom that is returning to dust.

And also, we are the light of the world!

- We are those who push back against the darkness.
- The lies that we believe draw our attention inward and away from the other.

Church! If not us, then whom!
And we remember that our saltiness and our light are derivative.

- It is not of us; it is of Him.
- We are ambassadors of an Eternal Kingdom governed by an Eternal King!
- And He has sent us into the kingdom of man, to DO GOOD works!

So that all of creation would give glory to the source of our saltiness and light…that is our Father who is in heaven!

**Look at the words of our Messiah here!**

- Is this who we are?
- Are we an outpost of the Kingdom pushing into the dark places of decay?
- Or are we a bomb shelter country club terrified that the governments of man are going to encroach on our kingdoms?

Church - Let's get at it! Do we understand the assignment?

The gates of hell do not quake at a people who are aimed inward and consumed by their own disagreements and internal documents!

- Creeds and confessions are important for our orientation and understanding, but they are not the destination!
- Let's get at it!
- Let's DO what we believe!
- Let's live like Christ, and reveal the goodness of God, who is not simply a doctrine to be understood, but a Lord to be obeyed.

**Illustration - A Work Culture of Disobedience.**
You go to orientation, and your CEO says a bunch of things, and the personnel manual says all these things…and then when you live out your job, coworkers say, don't worry about that… that's just something they put in there…no one listens to that; it's ok.
**And that culture is contagious!**

So then, therefore, may this place have a culture of obedience to Truth!
May we be a local outpost of God's inaugurated kingdom, with a posture of not only understanding truth, but also doing what we have received in Christ.

And please hear me…this is about a culture of obedience, not a culture of perfectionism!

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# Conclusion

## Consider

And before we close, let's consider the nuance of the deception.
Salvation power does produce works, but so can the power of man.

- There are those who will never trust Christ with their souls, yet will live lives full of good works.
- **How can we know which we are?**
  - Are we faking it, hoping to make it?
  - **Are our good works born out of the law of freedom or out of fear of the law?**
    - Do we use works as a mask to cover our death?
    - Or do our works declare our life?

How can we know for sure? Can we know for sure?

**1 John 5:13**
[13] I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. (ESV)

**Believe in the work of Jesus Christ in your place.**

- Believe that He made your cross, His cross, so that His place could become your place.
- In humility, receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which makes us new creations.
- And then we do what Paul said in Philippians 2:12–13:

[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

## SO THEN, THEREFORE, May We...

I know that in our flesh we don't simply want free will; we want to flex our personal sovereignty.

- To be the arbiters of what is good and evil.
- We want to reserve the right to decide what we obey and disobey,
- And in the church that turns into a culture of those who CONSIDER "**IF"** we should obey, not "**HOW"** we will obey.

And instead of receiving truth in humility, we are quick to speak in anger that the Gospel is a grace, and not a law, because the cross of Jesus declared obedience optional, and we become antinomians (anti-law)

- Our flesh protests that the commands of Christ that are echoed through the letters to the churches are suggestions that are silenced and overridden by grace.
  - And we misunderstand the difference between justification and sanctification.
  - We don't want to be orphans, but we have become comfortable at being disobedient children.
  - And we see the return of Christ as the beginning of the Kingdom of God, and not its completion.
  - And the church of Christ in this age is not salt and light in a dark world; it is a think tank on an elite and enlightened campus of religion.
  - And our best work is seen in the privacy of a voting booth.

May it not be so among us!

May we, as beloved Children of God, walk as new creations in the old creation.

- We do truth because we love and trust the One who not only declared truth, but revealed truth on the cross.
- We arrive as we are, for the sake of being transformed into who He is!
  - And we know that **is** a grace-fueled striving and straining, with fear and trembling, work of participation and cooperation with the very Spirit of the Living God.

We are those who have seen ourselves in the mirror, and see that none of us are righteous, no, not one.

- But Christ has died in our place to give us not just a new image, but a new life.
  - A life in which we say, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.
- And He obeyed; He did the will of the Father.
- And we go to daily war with our remaining flesh, in order that we might live for the glory of our God being made known in THIS age!

We don't obey for the sake of our souls; that work has already been done; we obey for the sake of His name!

- We do the work of mercy and love to a world that is not as it should be.
  - A world that is being uncreated by human greed and selfishness as it over-desires created things, and therefore capitalizes and steps on and past those who are in the margins of the ladders we climb for the glory of our own image.
  - A world in which children are left vulnerable not only to cold weather and hunger, but also to a lack of education and support.

- And they grow up fighting for scraps, and they become the next generation of poor, and are seen as those who are defiled, and they become the lepers outside our gated kingdoms of ivory and opulence.
  - Because unlike us, they have made unrighteous decisions that have put them in their place; their idolatry has damned them to the destruction of this age.

But again, may this hard heart not be so among us!
It certainly was not the heart of our King in the flesh!

**The will of God for the Church in the Already is that it would look like her Groom!**

- But the knowledge of His will is not the destination; it is the direction of our doing!
- We do God's Will.
- And we gather to stir and provoke one another to DO GOD's WILL!
- And we hear His truth, not as insecure orphans who continually feel the need to justify our disobedience, but rather we hear these things fully secure as beloved Children of our Good Father.

And so…we walk in the knowledge of God as revealed in the word of God!
As the Holy Spirit reminds us, convicts us, and calls us to live the blessed life, that is, storing up treasures in heaven, that is, set on that which is above, that is, aimed at the already pleasure of our King!

May we daily repent of our falling short, then request the provision of His power to run our race well for His glory.

Our God-ordained apologetic is LOVE!

- Sacrificial, flesh-shredding, others-focused doing of Love and good works!
- Our finances, day-planners, and calendars scream, may Christ be seen!
- May 1650 O'Henry Lane be a place where our faith is fanned into a flame for the sake of His name IN THE WORLD we now live in!
- Your neighbor wants to see Jesus, the orphan wants to see Jesus, the addicted in the subdivision and on the street want the same thing!
- They want to see Jesus!
- By His Grace, we are meant to DO that work TODAY, so that, by His grace, we all would one day stand before Him, not as those who see dimly in a mirror, but as those who stand before Him face to face!

What a day that will be!
But until that day, BELOVED Child of God - OBEY - Do His Will!
Reveal whose you are!
Let's Pray.

## Communion

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In a moment, we will receive the Lord's Supper, and so, in a visible way, today we will begin our week by receiving.
We receive the work of Christ's body for our sake.
In preparation, we will take the next few minutes to simply sit and consider what we have heard.
May it lead us all to repentance, and then thanksgiving for the one who did not just teach love, but did love.
And in doing love, He revealed what His Father's love is, so that we might believe and become.

## Logistics

After a few minutes of reflection, the worship team will lead us in song, and at that moment, if you have received the implanted word of Jesus and trust Him as your Lord and Savior, we invite you forward to take His bread and cup.
Because we know things can get tight during this coming to the front, there will be a diagram on the screen to guide us.