

Ouachita Baptist University

## Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

---

Vaught Sermon Notes: James

W.O. Vaught Archive

---

2-9-1977

### Looking in the Mirror -- Then Forgetting What You Saw

W. O. Vaught

*Ouachita Baptist University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn\\_james](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn_james)



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "Looking in the Mirror -- Then Forgetting What You Saw" (1977). *Vaught Sermon Notes: James*. 15.

[https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn\\_james/15](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/vn_james/15)

This Sermon Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the W.O. Vaught Archive at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vaught Sermon Notes: James by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact [mortensona@obu.edu](mailto:mortensona@obu.edu).

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR--THEN FORGETTING WHAT YOU SAW

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES  
NUMBER 12  
JAMES 1:22-25

Dr. W. O. Vaught  
Immanuel Baptist Church  
Little Rock, Arkansas

JAMES 1:22-25 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 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: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 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 our last study we saw in verse 22 that we have to be hearers before we can be doers. A doer is a believer who gets Bible doctrine out of his mind and stores it in his human spirit so he can apply what he knows to every situation of life. Now this is not the doing of "good deeds" but a "doer of the Word." When we build a structure of doctrine in our human spirits, then we have the necessary ingredients from which Christian character is developed. Don't let anyone sell you on the idea that you don't need doctrine, that you just need to get out and go to work. That has been one of the major problems of the church throughout history. More of our problems have arisen from this one idea than from almost any other error we have made. No doctrine applied means no "doing of the Word." You may be doing a program with a lot of overt activity, but it doesn't mean a thing as far as doing the will of God is concerned. We are to keep on being doers of the Word and not hearers only. This means that doctrine has not only been heard but by the aid of the Holy Spirit, it has been cycled into the human spirit and is on the launching pad ready for constant use.

When we are in the process of objective learning, we are indeed doing what God wants us to do, but to stop there is indeed tragic. That's like going to London to see the Queen but seeing a mouse under the chair instead.

Hearers only

In our last study we saw that word "only." That word "only" means that hearing is indeed a bona fide activity, but if it stops there, then we deceive ourselves. This is like trying to fire a gun without moving the shell over into the barrell where the trigger can hit the cap and cause it to explode. Doing the Word of God is not a system of Christian works, but it is applying the Word of God to every circumstance of life.

JAMES 1:23 "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:" In these next three verses James is going to illustrate the tragedy of learning doctrine and then walking away from it without doing it in daily living. This "if" here is a first class condition and it means "If, and it is true." It was true in James' day and it is true in our day. We have hearers who never become doers. The "any" is "tis" and it refers here to any believer. If any believer priest takes in Bible doctrine--and every one can. Now he may not completely understand it, but he can take it in. The word for hearer is "akroates" and it means it is heard, it goes into the soul. But if he is not a doer, and the word is "poietaes" and this means he is in reversionism and rebellion and refuses to go on and transfer what he knows into his human spirit and begin to live from this overflow in his spirit.

These are the people who get bored with doctrine and they go negative and thus they fail to grow and mature. This is what we call "pseudo reversionism." People will go along learning for a while and then they become discouraged and lose interest in learning and they hit a period of reversionism. (This is exactly what David did for almost a year after he committed his great sins of murder and adultery.) This is the true picture of multitudes of church members who once heard and were excited about it, but now have settled back into that "don't care" attitude and they are refusing to grow up.

To be a hearer and not a doer is the one who can talk a good case, can quote scripture, can even talk intelligently about doctrine, but he isn't a doer. The principle James is here setting forth is an accurate picture of millions of believers in every century.

He says "he is like" and this is a perfect tense of "eoika" and it means this principle always works out this way. People appear to be interested, they hear doctrine and appear to take it in, but they are stuck on hearing but they never get any farther than that. They are the people who are going nowhere in a hurry, and five or ten years later they are still "hearers" and they never become "doers." They actually resent any attempt that is made to prod them on into spiritual growth. The word for man here is "aner" and it means a nobleman, a man born into the nobility of a believer, a man who is a born again child of God. So this analogy is for believers only. The word beholding is a present, active, participle of "katanoeo" and it means to look at something and think in terms of a certain norm or standard. Remember that the figure here is an illustration of looking in a mirror and the one looking sees himself and thinks about what he sees. But the looking in the mirror is just for a short period and then one walks away and gets busy doing other things, begins to concentrate on other things, and begins to forget how he looked in that mirror.

This word "beholding your face" is compared to learning doctrine in your mind. You move on to other things and forget what you learned because you stopped at the "hearing stage" and never moved on to the "doing stage." "In a glass" comes from "en esoptron" and it means a clear mirror that gives a true picture of yourself. Now this is the hearer. You have the true picture. You have seen the truth in the mirror of the Word of God.

JAMES 1:24 "For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." For he beholdeth, and the word is "katanoeo" but here it is an aorist tense and it means you stood in front of the mirror long enough so you can get an accurate picture of yourself. This means you stood in front of doctrinal truth long enough so you learned it. Then this verse says, "And goeth his way" and the word is "aperchomai" and it means to depart. This is James' illustration of the man who looked long enough to learn doctrine, to get it into his mind, but then he stopped there. That is doctrine in the mind only. It means you know the doctrine so you can give it back to others. You can parrot scripture, you have memorized the words. But you can't use them or apply them for they are in your soul only. They are in the left lobe of your mind only, and have never been transferred over into the right lobe, the human spirit so you can use them.

You have walked off from the mirror. It is exactly like the man who comes to church once a week, looks doctrine in the face, then walks away and on Monday, Tuesday, ect., he forgets what he saw. You can't learn doctrine that you can use that way. The perfect tense here means you have gotten it in your mind, but you keep it there and never transfer it to the launching pad for use. This is superficial Christianity. This person goes his way and is attracted by other things. The mirror represents the Word of God, and looking into the mirror is an illustration of the time you spend studying the Word. Then you turn and leave it and forget what you saw in the Word.

It says "Straightway" and this is an adverb "eutheos" and it means immediately. Forgetting is an aorist, middle, indicative of "epilanthanomai" and it means to disregard, to ignore what you learned. You go away from doctrine and disregard it. The word for that is "hopios." It means what species, what category.

A good twentieth century illustration.

We have many alcoholics and drug addicts in our country. They once stood before a mirror and saw themselves. But in the intervening years they have gone through alcoholism or drug addiction and their image has been completely changed. Now they return to the mirror and in shocking horror they see themselves and can't believe it. They exclaim, "Can I actually look like that?" Now this is the illustration James gives us here for the man who heard doctrine and then walks away from it and never becomes a doer of what he has heard. He took in doctrine once, but he fell on a period of disregard and neglect.

Now James gives us the contrast to all this in verse 25.

JAMES 1:25 "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." "Looking" here is an aorist, active, participle of "Parakupto". It means to stoop down and examine something carefully, it means to concentrate, to look into something with positive volition. (This same verb is used for Peter stooping down and looking intently into the empty tomb. Peter himself used this same verb in 1 Peter 1:12 when he described angels bending down and looking intently at mankind and concentrating on everything man is doing. It is a picture of angels watching men so they will know how to battle with them in the angelic conflict.) So this verb describes the transferring doctrine from the hearing stage to the doing stage.

The word for "perfect" is "teleios" and this refers to the edification complex that has been erected in the human spirit. The believer concentrates on doctrine, and then he builds, and builds, and builds and finally he has erected this great structure of faith and truth in his human spirit.

The word "law" is "nomos" and refers to the Canon of Scripture and it refers to its function, its objective. The word is called "liberty" and is from "eleutheria" because it brings freedom to love Jesus Christ to love God, and to function under happiness.

Then James says "to continue" and it is an aorist, active, participle of "parameno" and it means consistency, it means keeping on, it means not giving up. It means day after day after day continuing in the Word

The words "he being" is an aorist, active, participle of "ginomai" and it means to become something you have not been before. So this one keeps on being not a forgetful hearer. It really says "a hearer of forgetfulness" and is from "epilesmone" and it means to blot out something that you knew. The emotional revolt of the soul and negative volition just cut the flow of truth off. But if you do just the opposite and don't let this happen, then you keep on learning and transferring truth to your spirit and eventually you will become a "doer of the word."

Happiness The Result

James says that the result of this process is happiness. He says, "shall be" and that is a future, active, indicative of "eimi" and it means it will always happen this way. The word for happiness is "makarios" and this refers to God's kind of happiness. It then says "happiness in his deeds" and it is en plu the locative of "poiesis."

So a correct reading of this last verse is something like this--  
 "But the one having looked intently, the one having concentrated, on the law of freedom which produces maturity, and having persisted, the one having become not a hearer and just stopping there, but goes on to doing divine good, this one shall be happy in all the action of his deeds."

So let us end with this question. Have you looked in the mirror of God's Word and then gone off and forgotten what you saw there? Or have you persisted, have you kept on keeping on, until you have become happy in all your deeds?