

• *Withstanding temptation*

James is telling us how to withstand temptation. He has asked us (i) to recognize temptation and accept responsibility for it^{☞1}, (ii) to trust in the goodness of God, (iii) to remember that God gave us the new birth which enables us to resist sin^{☞2}.

☞1 1:13-15
☞2 1:18

• *God's word*

His point now is: (iv) God gives us His word which rescues us from our sinful ways^{☞1}. God wants us to live on what He says to us.

☞1 1:19-25

1. We must be quick to listen to God's word

1. **We must be quick to listen to God's word.** He says, *'My beloved brothers and sisters, you know this already, but everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry'*^{☞1}. He has a word for 'everyone'. There are no exceptions to what he is saying.

☞1 1:19

• *Quick to listen*

He wants us to be quick to listen. In the context of James' whole paragraph, it is obvious that he means quick to listen to God's word.

• *Slow to get angry when God's word comes to us*

We must be slow to speak against God's word. And we must be slow to get angry when God's word comes to us. It is not anger in general that he is referring to (although he will come to that in James chapter 3). In the course of what he is saying it is clear that he means slow to become angry – in connection with hearing God's word. Sometimes when God speaks to us we get angry, either with God or with the person speaking to us for God. But this will never do us any good. Anger against God's word or God's servants never leads to righteousness: *'for human anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires'*^{☞1}.

☞1 1:20

2. We respond to God's word by getting rid of sin

2. **We respond to God's word by getting rid of sin.** James says: *'Therefore get rid of all uncleanness and the evil that is so prevalent...'* When we hold back our protests and our anger and allow God to speak to us, God will speak to us about 'moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent'. There is a **negative** work to be done, a work of uprooting. He says anger against God and His word is 'uncleanness'. He is thinking of resentment against God and similar sins, malice, covetousness, sexual impurity, deceit. James takes it for granted that we who are born again are capable of dealing with such things. We are to pull up such weeds from the garden of our lives: lying, stealing, ugly talk. There is 'evil that is so prevalent'. James knows that we do not have a **small** battle with sin, but a big one. There is an **abundance** of sinful habits that have to be broken.

• *A negative work to be done, a work of uprooting*

3. We must act upon the word implanted in us

3. **We must act upon the word implanted in us.** When we come to 'new birth' the word of God speaks to us with power; it also takes root within us and we are able to hold it fast^{☞1}. The word of God gets 'implanted'. It means that when God says something to us, what He says corresponds to something **within** us. We are born again; we have His gospel-message already in our hearts. James says 'You know this already, but ...' He knows that they already have the word of God in their hearts, yet now they must deliberately and consciously **receive** the word of God. The implication is that one can have received the word of God but right now **not** be receiving it with meekness. He that has ears (and so is able to hear), let him hear!

☞1 see Luke 8:13, 15

• *Deliberately and consciously receive the word of God*

James says *‘Therefore get rid of all uncleanness and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you’*^{¶2}.

¶2 1:21

• *God’s word is ‘able to rescue us from the power of sin’*

When God speaks we respond with meekness. There is to be no fighting against what God says. When we respond to the inner conviction, as well as the word of God that comes to us from outside, it is able to save us. ‘Save’ here does not mean ‘get our first salvation’, nor does it mean ‘get to heaven’. It means ‘able to rescue us from the power of sin’.

4. We avoid the danger of mere listening

4. We avoid the danger of mere listening. James says: *‘Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says’*^{¶1}. This is very deceptive. We often feel good when we hear a good message from God. But nothing has happened until we act on it. The atmosphere of a meeting may deceive us; our hearing from God has to be carried on to personal action.

¶1 1:22

5. The danger is that of forgetfulness

5. The danger is that of forgetfulness. It takes a certain amount of effort to hold on to what God says to us. *‘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’*^{¶1}, and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like^{¶2}. But the person 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^{¶3}. The secret of blessing is persistent looking into the law of liberty. The word of God is a ‘law of liberty’. It is not the Mosaic law – which was famous for producing bondage (as the apostles, including James, agreed, according to Acts 15:10). It is the law of the gospel, the law of Christ, the law that gives freedom, the law of love and forgiveness. It is the commands of Jesus, as we have them in the Sermon on the Mount and similar teaching. (The letter of James contains many echoes of the Sermon on the Mount.) There are two conditions for blessedness. The first is hearing. The second is obeying. There is no blessing when only one condition is met, only when the two requirements are met. There are two ‘If’s. If you know these things blessed are you if you do them!

¶1 1:23

¶2 1:24

¶3 1:25

• *Holding on to God’s word takes effort*

• *Two conditions for blessing – firstly hearing and secondly obeying*

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