

A. An article from Zondervan Academic recorded what Martin Luther had to say about this epistle:  
“Therefore St James’ epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it.”

“It’s often said that Luther was so opposed to the Book of James that he suggested it didn’t belong in the biblical canon. But while Protestant churches embraced many of Luther’s ideas and teachings, our Bibles clearly still include James today.”<sup>1</sup>

B. Earlier in this epistle, James wrote believers about having their faith tested which in the end produces blessed endurance. Look at **v12**.

You are to abide by the law of liberty	I. <u>THOSE WHO DELUDE THEMSELVES</u> II. <u>THE BLESSED DOERS OF THE WORD</u>
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### I. THOSE WHO DELUDE THEMSELVES →**v22**

A. An example of a hearer of the word is one who hears the gospel as a child or teenager at a Bible camp.

1. He or she gave a profession of faith, saying, “I believe in Jesus” or “I believe Jesus died for my sins.”

2. Keeping in mind that only God knows a person’s spiritual state at death for certain, consider those who die in unbelief with lives that only demonstrate fruitlessness and lawlessness.

Were they saved because they had a profession of faith as a child? No. According to **v22**, such people were only “**hearers who delude themselves.**”

a. WCF 25, sec 2 says the “visible church... is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

b. Can one be saved without church membership?

1. Yes. Think about the prison inmate who embraces the gospel or the person converted when believing the gospel as taught by a hospital chaplain.

2. Consider the one who was merely a hearer yet never a doer of the Word. If they died while rejecting the ministry of the church, there is no possibility of salvation for him or her.

B. What about those who hear the faithful preaching of Scripture frequently yet don’t care to live in the way God tells them to? — Matthew Henry wrote, “If we heard a sermon every day of the week, and an angel from heaven were the preacher, yet, if we rested in hearing only, it would never bring us to heaven. Mere hearers are self-deceivers; and self-deceit will be found the worst deceit at last.”<sup>2</sup>

C. James used an illustration of a mirror to explain those who are merely hearers and not doers of God’s Word. →**vv23-24**

1. Some look at self-help books or go to a psychologist to try to get to know themselves better.

2. Others have a distorted view of themselves and others because of the lie of evolution.

3. To truly know who you are and how you are to live, you need to look to God’s Word.

4. Looking at the Greek in **v23**, the fruitless hearer is like a man who “contemplates” or “considers” the “face of his birth.” This is his natural or true self as a sinner in need of Christ.

a. The mere hearer considers the gospel message and does nothing with it.

b. He walks away forgetting the person Scripture tells him he is.

<sup>1</sup> <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/martin-luther-james-bible>

<sup>2</sup> Henry, M., & Scott, T. (1997). *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* (Jas 1:22). Logos Research Systems.

## II. THE BLESSED DOERS OF THE WORD →v25

A. The Word of God is perfect. The moral law contained therein is perfect and holy and abides forever.

1. When you look intently at God's Word with faith, it will transform you.
2. True believers don't merely take a glance at the mirror of God's Word.
  - a. Prayerfully, asking for God's grace and the help of the Holy Spirit, they look repeatedly using this Holy Mirror to correct their true inner self.
  - b. Outwardly a woman may look beautiful on the outside, yet her heart may full of selfishness, hate, and evil intent. Looks can be deceiving!
  - c. The Lord said to Samuel, "**God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**"
  - d. If U know what is in your heart is not pleasing to God, ask Him for a mighty working of His grace to change your heart. → **Ezek 36:22-27**

B. In Jesus Christ and His Word there is liberty!

1. WCF 20, sec 1- "The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation."
  - a. Consider going online to OPC.org to look at the Scripture proof texts for this gospel-rich and encouraging section of the WCF.
  - b. Belief in these truths based on Scripture will help you grow in your assurance of salvation.
2. If you have this liberty in Christ, also pursue after having a liberty of conscience based on God's Word. WCF 20, sec 2 says, "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship."
  - a. Ultimately, it is God who is to tell you how you are to live.
  - b. If a preacher faithfully tells you what God says, don't resent the messenger!
  - c. Many people may try to dictate you life, but it is ultimately God who must be Lord— the Master— of your conscience. God's "**perfect law, the law of liberty**" is to dictate all doctrine. That will free you from the "doctrines and commandments of men" that are "contrary to His Word."

C. If you are listing to this message, you may be concerned about reconciling the teaching of James with that of the Apostle Paul.

1. Paul wrote in **Eph 2:8-9** "**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**"
2. **Ja 2:24** says, "**You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone**" (**v24**).
3. The answer is found in the audiences each man was dealing with.

Review, further application, and conclusion