

Any parent probably can probably relate to what my dad used to call selective listening. It is that process by which children tend only to listen to the things they want to do, although no doubt they heard with their ears everything that was said. James asserts in our text for the day that it is not only children who have selective listening. Rather he says that all too often it seems to be a problem of epidemic proportions in the human race as a whole and, yes, even among church going, bible believing Christians.

The book of James is in a sense different than the other books of the bible. For instance, Paul's writings tend to focus their efforts on talking about Christ's action of forgiving our sins through his death and resurrection. James on the other hand, tends to focus on how a forgiven person looks as he lives each day in faith. In other words to use a metaphor of Jesus, Paul is concerned to tell his readers primarily about how God has made good trees out a bunch of us old sinners through his death and resurrection. James focuses on what the apples should look like when the tree starts to grow. Our text is sort of the introduction to his whole book. James says that one sure mark of a Christian is that we are not only to be people who hear Gods word, but do it as well. Perhaps James was a couple thousand years ahead of Nike in his exhortation to "Just do it!" James warned that anyone can hear the Word of God, but it is Christians who not only hear it, but take it to heart. It is Christians who just do it! James says that for Christians, selective hearing must be turned off when we listen to God's Word. We are not to pick and choose those parts of God's word which conform to our life's and they way we live them. Rather we are to hear the word of God, let it have free course in our lives. We are to let it conform our lives to itself.

As we examine our lives today, we must consider if there areas in our life where we have decided to let God's word go in one ear and out the other? God says meditate on my Word, but

we decide that we are too busy to spend much time on that. God tells us to share with everyone we know the message of Christ, but yet we neglect to do so, even when good opportunities abound. God says to forgive one another and yet we hold grudges against people. Have you engaged in selective listening? Could you be accused of being a much better hearer of the Word than a doer of it?

James explains how many times we go about our lives by means of an illustration. He says that at times we are like one who looks into a mirror, and then seconds later can't even remember what he looks like. In other words, we hear at church that God has made us his children, but then often live as if we never heard it all. But it doesn't have to be that way. James also explains what a true doer of the word is like. He is one who truly takes time to peer into the mirror and reflect on what he sees. Literally, he is one who stoops down to get a good look at what is in the mirror. A doer of the Word is one that makes sure he is not going to forget who he is the second he looks away. He is one that makes sure the promises of God are not just in a book on his shelf, but in his heart and mind as well.

But the questions can be asked, what are the promises of God that apply to us? If we take the time to stoop down and truly peer into the mirror, the word of God, what do we see? Who is the man or woman in the mirror that we are to remember? Just a cursory look through the New Testament helps us know who we are as Christians. Romans says that we are more than conquerors through Christ. It tells us that we are dead to sin, but alive to Christ. It tells us that we are no longer in slavery to sin, but free to live for God. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Paul reminds us that Christ's spirit dwells in us. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, we are reminded that anyone that is in Christ is a new creation, the old has gone the new has come. Galatians remind us that we are clothed in Christ. It says that it was for freedom that Christ set us free. Ephesians say that we are right

now seated with Christ in the heavenly places, and may put on the new self which is created in righteousness and holiness. Colossians again reminds us that we were raised with Christ, having the body of flesh removed from us at our baptism. Paul's letter to Timothy reminds us that we have been given a spirit of power and love and discipline. Peter calls us a royal priesthood and holy nation who has been freed to be servants of God. And John reminds us that we are born of God in order that we might not sin. The message is clear throughout scripture. Those of us who are baptized into Christ are no longer bound to sin as we used to be. Since Christ dwells in us, we are free to serve him, to live for him, to be doers of the word. The picture in the mirror is that of freedom from sin.

But the question remains, will you remember all this when you leave the mirror today given by God's Word? Or will you go on living as if you have no choice but to sin, no choice but to live like the rest of the world. After all you are just human, there is so much temptation, and God will forgive you anyways. If you live that way you are like the man who looks in the mirror and forgets what he looks like. Rather walk each day knowing the freedom from sin that Christ has given to you. When Satan comes with his temptations trying to hit you at your lowest point with the things you are most tempted by, remind him of what you saw in the mirror. Tell him that you have looked into the law of liberty and know that no longer do you have to give in because Christ lives in you to will and to do his perfect will. Satan loves it when Christians forget what we look like because of what Christ did for us. For it is the only way he has a chance against God people. But when we tell him that he is judged because of Christ actions on the cross and at the empty tomb, he is powerless. As a mighty fortress which we sang last week reminded us, one little word can fell Satan, that word being the name of our Lord, Jesus. When Satan tempts, tell him that you are free because you bear the cross upon your forehead and

breast, because you are baptized into him just like Marissa was today. Tell him that you, Marissa and all other Christians have victory through Christ.

Yes, James reminds us today is that when we take time to look into the mirror to realize all of the wonderful ways in which God has blessed us, we become doers of the words and not merely hearers because we realize that we are free to do so. It is simply who God has made us to be. So, today as you leave the mirror of God's word, take James advice, just do it! Christ has forgiven you for the times when you have forgotten who you are and shown you again all the blessings of being His child. Stoop down, look into the mirror which shows God's grace, and rise to live as His own dear child. Do not only hear the word but do it as well.

Amen.