

## **1:22 Doers of the Word**

### **ONE WORD.**

AUGUSTINE: James did not say “of the words” but “of the Word,” in spite of the fact that there are so many words from the Holy Scriptures which are venerated in the church. SERMONS 77.22.<sup>35</sup>

### **DOING THE WORD.**

AUGUSTINE: Neither I nor any other preacher can see into your hearts ... but God is looking, for nothing can be hidden from him. Do not deceive yourselves by coming eagerly to hear the Word and then failing to do it. If it is a good thing to hear, it is a much better thing to do. If you do not hear, you cannot do, and therefore you will build nothing. But if you hear and do not do, then what you are building will be a ruin. SERMONS 179.7-8.<sup>36</sup>

### **BE MINDFUL.**

ANDREAS: In other words, be mindful of your own salvation! CATENA.<sup>37</sup>

### **GIVING EFFECT TO WHAT IS HEARD.**

OECUMENIUS: James knows that some people can get all excited by what they hear, but even in the course of listening their enthusiasm may start to cool off. Therefore he adds these words, so that they may give effect to what they hear. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.<sup>38</sup>

## **1:23 Hearers of the Word**

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT MIRRORS PERFECTION.**

HILARY OF ARLES: There are two kinds of mirrors—large and small. In a small mirror you see small things—this is the Old Testament, which leads no one to perfection. But in a big mirror you see great things—this is the New Testament, because in it the fullness of perfection is seen. INTRODUCTORY TRACTATE ON THE LETTER OF JAMES.<sup>39</sup>

### **CONFIRM THE WORD.**

ANDREAS: If someone is a hearer of the word only and does not confirm it by his deeds, he will lose the word as well, for it will slip through his fingers and disappear. CATENA.<sup>40</sup>

## **FORGETTING THE WORD.**

OECUMENIUS: James here uses the common mirror as a metaphor for the intellectual mirror, but without going into details. Think of him as saying that someone who hears a sermon but does not put any of it into practice is like a man who having seen himself in the mirror immediately forgets what he looked like.

COMMENTARY ON JAMES.<sup>41</sup>

## **1:24 *The Person in the Mirror***

### **REMEMBERING OUR REGENERATION.**

ANDREAS: We learn what God has made us like, having given us new birth by the washing of regeneration. But if we do not remember what we have seen and apply it in our deeds, then we shall lose the grace which has been given to us. But the one who remembers that he has been born again from on high, that he has been justified, and sanctified and counted among the children of God, will not give himself over to works which reject that grace. CATENA.<sup>42</sup>

### **FORGETTING THE DIVINE IMAGE IN US.**

OECUMENIUS: This is like the person who has used the law of Moses to contemplate what he was made like, that is, the image and likeness of God the Creator, but afterwards draws no conclusions about his own behavior from what he has looked at and instead goes back to being just what he was before.

COMMENTARY ON JAMES.<sup>43</sup>

## **1:25 *The Perfect Law of Liberty***

### **DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF LIBERTY.**

AUGUSTINE: The law of liberty is one of love, not fear. Paul too was no longer terrified by the law of God as a slave would be but was delighted with it, even though he saw another law in his members which was at war against the law of his mind. <sup>44</sup> ON NATURE AND GRACE 57 (67).<sup>45</sup>

### **THE PERFECT LAW LIBERATES.**

OECUMENIUS: The spiritual law contains something magnificent and altogether desirable, which is able to draw people away even from following it corruptly, and able to make them perfect. The perfect law is liberating because it is the law of Christ, which sets us free from all slavery to the flesh, whether that means observance of the sabbath, circumcision, ritual purifications or whatever. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.<sup>47</sup>

### **1:26 *Bridling the Tongue***

#### **THE UNBRIDLED TONGUE.**

BASIL THE GREAT: Anger causes tongues to become unbridled and speech unguarded. Physical violence, acts of contempt, reviling, accusations, blows and other bad effects too numerous to recount are born of anger and indignation. SERMONS 10.<sup>48</sup>

#### **TRUE RELIGION.**

ANDREAS: This rule is the bottom line of true religion. CATENA.<sup>50</sup>

#### **THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION.**

OECUMENIUS: If you want to be truly religious, do not demonstrate this by your knowledge of the law but by the way you put it into practice. Religion appears to mean something more than “faith,” in that it offers the knowledge of hidden things and confirmation of what is grasped by faith. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.

51

### **1:27 *Pure and undefiled Religion***

#### **WHICH FIELDS ARE TO BE BOUGHT.**

HERMAS: Instead of fields, buy souls that are in trouble, according to your ability. Look after widows and orphans. Do not neglect them. Spend your riches on these kinds of fields and houses. PARABLES 1.8.<sup>52</sup>

### **BECOME MORE LIKE GOD.**

CHRYSOSTOM: We can become more like God if we are merciful and compassionate. If we do not do these things, we have nothing at all to our credit. God does not say that if we fast we shall be like him. Rather he wants us to be merciful, as he himself is. "I desire mercy," he says, "and not sacrifice." <sup>53</sup> CATENA.<sup>54</sup>

### **THE VULNERABILITY OF WIDOWS.**

HILARY OF ARLES: James calls God the Father because as far as he is concerned there is no other god who made the world (as the Marcionites and other heretics claim). What he says about widows has to be understood in the light of the fact that there were many who tried to rob them of their possessions, as it says in the Gospel. <sup>55</sup> INTRODUCTORY TRACTATE ON THE LETTER OF JAMES.<sup>56</sup>

### **A GRADUAL WEANING FROM THE LAW.**

OECUMENIUS: Here someone might say: If James is a teacher of the covenant established by Christ, why does he not just abolish everything connected with the law, instead of exalting it by supporting those who are experienced in keeping it? Why does he not rebuke them and turn them away from it? To this we answer that James accommodates himself to them and starts where they are. Rather than attack the law head on, he draws them away from it gradually, aware that they are suspicious of new ideas and inclined toward skepticism about them. By doing this he increasingly prepares them to hear what he has to say and then weans them away from observance of the law little by little. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.<sup>58</sup>

### **THE UNGODLY LED ASTRAY.**

THEOPHYLACT: In this verse the "world" refers to the common and ungodly people who are led astray by their lusts and errors. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.<sup>59</sup>