

# THE PREPARATIONS NECESSARY TO WITHSTAND TRIALS AND TEMPTATION

## JAMES 01:19–27

### *Introduction*

This is a great passage of Scripture, a very descriptive passage. In no uncertain terms there are several preparations that must be made in order to overcome temptation.

Without these preparations, temptation can never be conquered.

- I. Preparation 1: be quick to hear the Word of God (vv. 19-21).
- II. Preparation 2: be a doer of the Word and not a listener only (vv. 22-25).
- III. Preparation 3: control the tongue (v. 26).
- IV. Preparation 4: visit the needy and keep yourself from being polluted by the world (v. 27).

### **I. *James 01:19–21 Hearing the Word of God***

Preparation one: Be quick to hear the Word of God. The thrust of these three verses is seen in v. 21: receiving the Word so that a person's soul will be saved. The greatest temptation in the world is for a person to walk through life doing what he wants and pleases, and thereby ignoring, neglecting and rejecting God. The result is death (Jas. 1:15). Therefore, if a person is to be saved — if he is to be delivered from the great temptation that will doom his soul — he must prepare himself. He must be quick to hear the Word of God. He must make sure that he hears the Word of God. How can a person make sure that he hears the Word of God? Make sure that he can receive the Word and save his soul? This passage says that he has to do five things.

1. He must be slow to speak. This means that a person must be willing to listen instead of speaking his own ideas about right and wrong and about how a person is saved. He must sit and listen instead of hanging on to his own ideas; he must be willing to listen to God's Word instead of insisting upon what he thinks.
  2. He must be slow to wrath or anger. This means at least two things.
    - => A person must not react against what God says about temptation and sin nor about what God says about salvation. If a person reacts against God's plan of salvation and follows his own plan, he is dooming himself. No person can ever be saved or conquer temptation if he reacts in anger against God's Word of salvation and righteousness.
    - => A person must not become angry and act against others in wrath. Anger and wrath disturb and distract. An angry person cannot focus his thoughts and spirits upon God's Word, not enough to hear what the Word is saying. An angry person just cannot do what God says; he cannot live righteously nor receive the righteousness of God's salvation (v. 20).
  3. He must put aside all *filthiness*. The picture is that of taking off a dirty garment and putting it aside. A person must put off every dirty thing and lay it off to the side away
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from himself. If he enjoys the dirt and filth, then his mind is going to be on it. His mind will not be clear, not enough to hear the Word of God. William Barclay makes the point that the Greek word for “filth” (*ruparia*) is taken from the Greek word *rupos*. The word is sometimes used to refer to *wax in the ear* (*The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 66). The picture is descriptive: a person with wax in the ear cannot hear the Word of God, not clearly. Therefore, he must take the wax out of his ear and put it away or else he will be deaf to the Word of God.

4. He must put aside all that remains of evil. The idea is this: even after putting aside all moral filthiness, there will still be some evil that will show up within us. Therefore, we must be alert to these uprisings and put them off and lay them aside as well. We must be completely clean and pure from all dirt and evil in order to hear the Word of God.
5. We must receive the Word of God with humility. We must be *as a child* before God our Father, that is, sit before Him humbly just as a child does his father. The idea is that we must be humble, gentle, quiet and attentive in listening to the Word of God. We must sit and listen with an open heart ready to hear exactly what our Father says.

The person who sits before God like this discovers a most wonderful thing. Note the word “planted” (*emphuton*). It means to implant; to be born within. When a person listens and hears the Word of God, it is planted within his heart and life. What God says is actually born within his heart, and the man hears exactly what God says. The Word of God is born within his heart and life and the person’s soul is saved. He conquers and triumphs over all temptation, including the terrible temptation of rejecting God and doing his own thing and living like he wants. He is saved to live eternally with God. This is the first preparation that a person must make to withstand temptation; he must be quick to hear the Word of God.

**Mat 13:23** *“But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”*

**Luke 10:39** *She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.*

**Acts 2:41-42** *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

**Acts 17:11** *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

**1 Th 2:13** *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

**Mat 13:16** *“But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.”*

**Luke 8:15** “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

**James 1:19** My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

**Prov 15:31** He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.

**Prov 18:15** The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

**Eccl 5:1** Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

## II. **James 01:22–25 Live the Word of God Faithfully**

Preparation two: Do the Word of God; do not be a hearer only. Contrary to what most people think, it is not enough to hear and know the Word of God; we must live and do the Word of God. Note three points.

1. The person who only hears and knows the Word deceives himself. If a person thinks that he can hear and learn the Word of God and then go out and live like he wants, he deceives himself.

**Thought 1.** There are many who sit under the Word of God week after week, and they learn and know as much of the Word as anyone. They think that their listening and learning makes them acceptable to God, that it makes them safe and secure. When they slip into sin, they feel that they can ask God for forgiveness and that He will forgive them. They just feel that God would never reject them. But note something, the most critical fact: God does not accept us because we hear and know the Word nor because we confess our sins. Each of these are necessary and very important, but they are not enough.

=> God accepts us because we *confess and repent*. Repentance means that we turn away from our sins and turn to God. God accepts us because we turn to Him and live for Him. When we believe God — really believe Him — then it is that we trust and follow Him, doing exactly what He says.

2. The person who only hears and knows the Word soon forgets what he has heard. If a person does not practice what he learns, it soon fades from memory. It is just forgotten, and it never becomes a part of the person’s life. He is like the person who looks in a mirror to see if he needs to do anything to his appearance, then walks away and thinks of something else and forgets the pimple or rustled hair that needed to be cared for.

**Thought 1.** How much like what happens so often. We hear the Word and are convicted of some defect, some shortcoming, some failure that we need to clean up. But as soon as we walk out from under the Word, we are distracted by the world and its affairs and we soon forget to do what the Word of God told us to do.

3. The person who hears and does the Word of God is blessed. Note that the Word of God is called the *perfect law that gives freedom*. This means that the Word of God will set a person free from the bondages of sin and death. The Word of God will free a person from all the temptations of this life and give him the full and victorious life for which his soul longs — a life that will continue on and on eternally with God.

A person who does and lives the Word of God will find that he is freed from all that enslaves his soul upon earth. He will discover love, joy and peace — a soul that just soars with a sense of...

- freedom and liberty
- security and safety
- joy and rejoicing
- life over death
- purpose and meaning
- victory over temptation
- assurance and confidence
- deliverance from sin

The Word of God is the law that gives freedom, the law that sets a man free to know and fellowship with God forever and ever. But note a critical point: we must continue in the Word of God. We must continue to live just like it says. If we do, then we shall be blessed, made abundantly and eternally happy.

**Mat 7:21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

**Mat 12:50** *“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*

**Luke 6:46-49** *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me, and hears my words, and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on a rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house, but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”*

**John 13:17** *“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”*

**Rom 2:13** *For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.*

**James 1:22** *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

**1 John 2:17** *The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

**Rev 22:14** *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

### III. *James 01:26 Control of One's Tongue*

Preparation three: Control the tongue; keep a tight rein on the tongue. If a person thinks that he is religious, that is, acceptable to God, and he does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself. No matter what he thinks or professes, his religion is empty. And note: the word religious (threskos) and religion (threskeia) describes a person who is very religious, who gives great attention to religion (RVG Tasker. *The General Epistle of James*. "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p. 54). The person is actively religious, very faithful in his religious worship and service. But he is loose with his tongue...

- interrupting and dominating the conversation
- being easily provoked and lashing out at others
- gossiping and telling tales
- criticizing and murmuring
- judging and condemning others
- using slang and cursing
- engaging in suggestive and off-coloured talk
- talking about and running down others

As stated, no matter what a person thinks — no matter how religious he is — if he does not keep a tight reign on his tongue, he deceives himself. His religion is empty. He does not please God and is thereby unacceptable to God. For a person to withstand and to conquer temptation, he must control his tongue. This is the third preparation necessary to conquer temptations.

*Eph 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

*Titus 3:1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

*James 3:6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

*James 4:11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.*

*1 Pet 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

*Psa 34:13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.*

*Prov 13:3 Those who guard their lips preserve their life, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.*

**Prov 21:23** *Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.*

**James 1:26** *If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.*

**1 Pet 3:10** *For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech."*

#### **IV. James 01:27 Pure Religion**

Preparation four: Practice pure religion, visit the needy, and keep yourselves from being polluted by the world. Two things are said to be necessary in this preparation.

1. A person must visit the orphans and widows in their affliction. This certainly would apply to visiting all who have need within a community, those who are...
  - orphaned      • bedridden      • widowed      • lonely
  - shut-in      • grieved      • newcomers
  - fatherless or motherless      • lost or unsaved

Whatever the need, God expects us to visit them. He expects us to reach all within our community, and the task is not really all that difficult, not in a country where a church is in practically every community. Just think of a church within a community being surrounded by rows of houses. The minister and the members can easily visit every home by simply setting up several visitation hours and simply going house to house. As they go all they have to do is share that they are visiting for Christ and the church to see if they can be of any help to the family. Letting the community know that one really cares will cause many to call upon the believers of the church when the hour of crisis strikes, and it will strike, for it strikes us all. In addition to this, every church should, of course, have a corps of genuine believers who can share Christ with the lost. Now note:

*"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after..."*  
(v. 27).

**Mat 10:12-14** *"As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town."*

**Luke 9:4-5** *"Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them."*

**Mat 20:28** *"Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**Mat 25:34-36** *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”*

**Mat 28:19-20** *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Mark 16:15** *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

**James 5:14** *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

**1 Pet 4:9** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

**Rom 15:1** *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

**Gal 6:2** *Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

**Heb 13:3** *Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

2. A person must keep himself from being polluted by the world. Pure religion does not become corrupted with false beliefs or with false religion. It holds to the purity of the gospel and to the Word of God. Pure religion does not focus upon form and ritual and ceremony. It focuses upon the power of God to change lives eternally and it reaches out to change people’s lives by visiting them.

Pure religion does not become morally corrupt; it does not become entangled with the affairs and pleasures of this world. True religion stirs people to separate themselves from the things of this world that arouse their fleshly desires and cravings. True believers of true religion keep themselves unspotted from the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh (sinful nature), and the pride of life, the boasting of what he has and does. This is a necessary preparation if a person is to conquer the temptations and sins of this world.

**Mat 5:8** *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”*

**John 15:19** *“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”*

**Acts 2:40** *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”*

**Rom 12:2** *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**1 Cor 7:31** *Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.*

**2 Cor 6:17-18** *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

**2 Th 3:6** *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.*

**1 Tim 1:5** *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

**2 Tim 2:4** *No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.*

**1 Pet 1:22** *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

**1 John 2:15-16** *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

**Isa 52:11** *Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the Lord's house.*

**Eph 5:11** *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ■*