

The Word is like a mirror; Paul made this point in 1 Corinthians 13:12. The “hearer-only” is someone who *beholds himself* and sees the imperfections but then leaves and forgets *what manner of man he was*. His look in the mirror reveals something that calls for action, but he never does anything about it. He simply goes away and continues in a sustained state of imperfection. Because no improvements are made, he remains in that state. After a short while, he *forgets* those imperfections since he is no longer in front of this *mirror*.¹

The metaphor of a person looking in a mirror and subsequently forgetting what he or she looks like corresponds to “not doing,” because in hearing the word, one gets a glimpse of truth about oneself, but failure to then do the word makes the encounter purely momentary and external—a mere reflection, not the real thing. When they did look in a mirror, they realized, of course, that they were looking at their own image, but a onetime exposure.²

ἑσποτρον, *mirror*: look at one’s face in a mirror, James 1:23. See indirectly in a mirror (because one sees not the thing itself, but its mirror image) 1 Corinthians 13:12.³

27. When a person looks into a mirror, he sees his own image, but when he walks away, that image is gone and soon forgotten.
28. This is a metaphor of the mirror of the soul. In the *noús* the believer is able to acquire academic comprehension of a biblical truth and even transfer it by faith over to the *kardía*.
29. But when the subject changes or class is dismissed, that information is illustrated by the act of walking away from a mirror, the information is not fully metabolized as a path of least resistance.
30. Some believers treat the Bible as a mirror. They open it up, follow along with the study, then walk away “immediately forgetting” what they just learned.
31. The one who looks into the mirror and walks away quickly forgets what he saw and turns his attention to other issues.
32. The person who looks into the Word and understands what is communicated, but then, forgets its message is a hearer, not a doer.

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “James,” in *Ariel’s Bible Commentary: The Messianic Jewish Epistles* (Tustin, Cal.: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 236.

² Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 120–21.

³ Walter Bauer, “ἑσποτρον,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 397.



33. Principle: Hearing must precede doing if the doing is to be accomplished under the filling and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
34. Those who are doers without first hearing fall into the same trap. Their efforts are human viewpoint at best and evil at worst.
35. The sequence of producing divine good and invisible historical impact is: hear first, believe by transference, retain by facilitation, and apply under the power of the Holy Spirit.

James 1:23 For if, and it is true, anyone is a hearer of the Word in the *noús* and not a doer from the *kardía*, such a person, is like a nobleman who looks contemplatively at his facial features in a mirror; (EXT)

James 1:24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was. (NASB)

1. The verse opens with the same word for “looking” that we just noted in verse 23. In that verse it was a present active participle of *katanoéō*, to *contemplate* one’s face.
2. This same word kicks off verse 24 but here *katanoéō* is an aorist active indicative. The aorist’s use here is culminative which stresses the cessation of an act or state. Its essential nature is summarizing and concluding.⁴
3. The active voice means the “looker/hearer” produces the action described: he has looked ... and gone away.”
4. The indicative mood certifies this as a statement of fact.
5. So, in verse 23 the “looker” contemplates his face while in verse 24 he keep on looking until he is satisfied he’s examined all the nuances of his appearance and then he walks away.
6. After he concludes his “looking,” he then “goes away,” the perfect active indicative of the verb **ἀπέρχομαι** (*apérchomai*): “to depart.” The perfect tense is intensive which places emphasis on existing results which indicates the fruition of a finished product. This means that when special attention is directed to the results of the action, stress upon the existing fact is intensified.⁵

⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 559.

⁵ H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1955), 202.



7. This means the person is not able to apply doctrine to life and circumstances. He is inconsistent in attendance, lackadaisical in his concentration, and haphazard in his application.
8. To get the full meaning of the mirror metaphor one must understand that the mirror is the Word of God. Looking into the mirror is the period of time when doctrine is being taught. It goes into the *noús* where it advances no farther than academic understanding.
9. For this individual, the impact of doctrine on his life may be described thusly: On Sunday he looks into the mirror, acquires some biblical ideas and then leaves. Next Sunday he comes back, looks into the mirror again. Then leaves.
10. A month later he comes back, looks into the mirror. Then leaves. He becomes frustrated. After six months he looks into the mirror again. Then leaves.
11. Details of life begin to wear him down. He thinks he should look into the mirror again. He comes back. Concentration is difficult. Then, he leaves.
12. This is an extreme example of a “hearer believer.” But churches are filled to the balconies with members who look into the mirror every Sunday and then walk away.
13. Nothing ever gets cycled into the *kardía*; nothing is ever recalled; nothing is ever applied. There are reasons for this. First is negative volition or worse when nothing has been consistently taught from the pulpit.
14. The intensified perfect tense of *apérchomai* is thus illustrated. This believer was inconsistent in his attendance: going and coming or coming and going as if he were shopping at Walmart.
15. That inconsistent attendance resulted in him being lackadaisical in his concentration. His recall is as fractured as the drunkards of Ephraim in Isaiah 28:10–13. The denouement is given in:

Isaiah 28:13b That they may go and stumble
backward, be broken, snared and taken captive.
(NASB)
16. The failure to apply doctrine leads to haphazard application under pressure and increasing advancement in the categories of reversionism.



17. “Why do the heathen rage?” Because absent thought they cannot devise a solution. “Why do they devise a vain thing?” Because the things they concoct are hopeless. “Why do they stand idle?” Because without divine guidance they don’t know where to go.⁶
18. These hopeless questions are those an ever-increasing number of citizens in our client nation will soon be asking. Already, some are thinking it now, “Why do these heathen rage?”
19. The word “heathen” in Psalm 2:1 is the plural noun גוֹיִם (*Goyim*): Used to describe nations other than Israel: pagan, Gentile, or heathen.
20. The word “rage” is a hapax legomenon of the Qal perfect, active verb רָגַשׁ (*ragash*):

A verb meaning to be in commotion, to rage against. This word appears only in Psalm 2:1 where it denotes the uproar and plotting of the wicked against the righteous. The image of a gathering lynch mob conveys well the action suggested here.⁷

21. The Qal perfect indicates that the action is finished and was produced by the mob. This verse is or will soon be asked out loud in this country.
22. This question was also posed in the New Testament by a gathering of believers in Jerusalem. They prayed to the Father by citing, “David Your servant”:

Acts 4:25b ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?’

23. The reason they addressed this question to the Father is because Peter and John had just returned from giving testimony before the Sanhedrin whose leadership commanded these two men, “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18b).
24. The background of this event is explained by the context of the prayer offered:

Acts 4:26 ‘The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.’

⁶ Quotations 1 and 2 are from Proverbs 2:1 and Acts 4:25; number 3 from Matthew 20:6.

⁷ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, “רָגַשׁ,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 1036.



v. 27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

Acts 4:28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

v. 29 “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence.”

25. The following excerpt gives details on who the heathen are that rage. Their rage ultimately resulted not with a hanging from a noose but from a wooden cross.

In Psalm 2, the groups enumerated are equated with the various persons and groups involved in Jesus' crucifixion: “the kings of the earth” with King Herod; “the rulers” with the Roman governor Pontius Pilate; “the nations” with the Gentile authorities; and “the people” with “the people of Israel.” It seems that sometime just prior to the Christian period, Psalm 2 was beginning to be used within Jewish nonconformist circles as a messianic psalm and that the early Jewish Christians knew of this usage and approved it—though in its application to Jesus of Nazareth.

Second, in the church's prayer the sufferings of Christian believers are related directly to the sufferings of Christ and inferentially to the sufferings of God's righteous servant in the Old Testament. This theme of the union of the sufferings of Christ and those of his own is a theme that is developed in many ways throughout the New Testament (Romans 8:17; Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 2:20–25; 3:14–4:2; 4:12–13). It reaches its loftiest expression in Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ.

Most significant is the fact that these early Christians were not praying for relief from oppression or judgment on their oppressors but for enablement “to speak your word with great boldness” amid oppressions and for God to act in mighty power “through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:30). Their concern was for God's word to go forth and for Christ's name to be glorified, leaving to God himself their own circumstances. Luke has evidently taken pains to give us this prayer so that it might serve as something of a pattern to be followed in our own praying [Acts 4:24–30].⁸

⁸ Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John–Acts*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 9:308–309.

