

Scholars refer to the work James writes as one of the catholic letters of the New Testament. In addition to the thirteen letters attributed to Paul, and the letter to the Hebrews, the New Testament contains seven other loosely defined letters. The term catholic is used in this context to denote the broader or universal Church, unlike Paul's letters which are addressed to a particular local church. James tells us we are, to more than hear, we are to do and I would add be the Word. A mere hearer of the Word is like someone who looks in the mirror and not much beyond. No one, friends, has seen their own face until they've look deeply into the eyes of the Gospel. To be quick to hear the Gospel is to accept it readily and to act in conformity with it. To listen but refuse to practice is the decision to remain in detention. Keep yourselves unstained by the world and remain free.

Our dance into the life of God, is a multilayered adventure that requires patience. As we mature in our Christian faith, Christ's illumination shines ever brighter, upon and from us. Healing and faith too operate more on a dial, than on a switch. What would have become of the blind man in our Gospel, had he not sought clearer vision?

Can anyone be satisfied seeing, but not able to identify? Sure, it is better than no sight. Our fellow could at least detect motion, which is helpful, but still less than fullness. God expects that we will move and grow into ever deepening levels of awareness. In fact, the story of God's revelation to humankind has always been gradual and incremental and never more complete than through encounter with the person of Jesus our Christ.

The blind man follows a bit of a process. It isn't the instant type of healing; Jesus has seemingly performed in the past. This man is led outside, the little town of Bethsaida. A solution is mixed, hands are laid upon the man's eyes, and then the process is repeated a second time. Only gradually is this person's sight returned! I think this is probably a more normative way people come to healing and enlightenment and healing always involves our active participation.

Amen