

James 1:19-27 – Behaving Faith – Part 3

1

Introduction

It is important to receive God's Word, but one must also be obedient to its truths. When one receives the word of God, he becomes responsible to truth. Without obedience, the Word is without benefit and becomes judgment against the reader. The bottom line of true spiritual life is not a momentary feeling of compliance or commitment but long-term obedience to Scripture (cf. John 8:31).

Those who consistently disobey God's Word give evidence that they are without His life within them. Those who consistently obey the Word give evidence of the life of God in their souls. The central theme of James's epistle, is stated in James 1:22 – "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

2

James 1:19-27

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. ²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

3

A Willingness to Receive the Word with Obedience.

James 1:22

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

The phrase “**but be doers**” carries the idea of “**continually be doing**”. Many people can become so enamored with their knowledge of God's Word that they become satisfied with their knowledge and abandon the effort to live out that knowledge. A true believer will not be inwardly satisfied with merely knowing the Word. His conscience and the prompting of the indwelling Holy Spirit will keep convicting him of his failure until he becomes obedient.

4

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The word “**doers**” carries the idea of the whole personality, all of a person’s inner being—mind, soul, spirit, and emotions. James is speaking of Christian doers of the word, emphasizing **what they are** rather than just what they do. There are people whose very lives are **dedicated not only to learning God’s Word but also to faithful and continual obedience to it.**

5

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The Greek word “**hearers**” was used of those who sat passively in an audience and listened to a singer or speaker. Tragically, most churches have many who willingly expose themselves to the teaching and preaching of the Word but have no desire for that knowledge to alter their day-by-day lives. They take advantage of the privilege of hearing God’s Word but have no desire for obeying it. Such people, who are merely hearers and not also doers, think they belong to God, when, in reality, they do not.

6

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The character of men is evidenced primarily by their conduct. Over time, conduct is always a reliable test of the inner person, for the true nature of the person will eventually express itself outwardly. “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Matt. 7:16–17).

7

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Just as there are three elements to hearing and receiving the Word (with submission, purity, and humility), so there are also three elements to obeying the Word. Thus, the true believer, the hearer and doer of the Word, proves his faith in three ways: In relation to **himself**, he is willing to **apply the Word without deception** (1:22b–26); in relation to **others**, he is willing to **apply the Word without selfishness** (v. 27a); and in relation to the **world**, he is willing to **apply the Word without compromise** (v. 27b).

8

A Willingness to Receive the Word without Deception.

James 1:22b

Deceiving yourselves.

Any response to the Word other than faithful, unqualified obedience is self-deceptive. The word “**deceiving**” in verse 22 literally means “to reason beside, or alongside, and therefore refers to incorrect reckoning or reasoning, often including the idea of deliberate false reasoning for the purpose of deceiving”. In mathematics, the meaning is that of miscalculation. Professing Christians who hear the Word without obeying it make a serious spiritual miscalculation, which causes them to delude themselves. They are self-deceived.

9

A Willingness to Receive the Word without Deception.

James 1:23-24

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

In order to explain this self-deception, James uses a simple analogy: “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”

The word “**observing**” is a compound word. Part of the word means “to perceive, or look at something”. The other part means “simply”. Put together it carries the idea of **careful, cautious consideration** of what is being looked at. The hearer of the word who is not also a doer is like a person who carefully observes his natural face in a mirror, yet, as soon as he is finished looking, has immediately forgotten what kind of person he has just observed himself to be.

10

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A person who looks at God's Word, even if it is carefully and accurately done, and yet does not apply the truths he has discovered to his own life, is like someone who immediately forgets what he has just seen in a mirror—except that the consequences are immeasurably worse. He sees his sin portrayed for the horrible evil that it is and he also sees God's gracious provision in Christ for a remedy, yet he goes on his way as if he were never exposed to those realities.

11

A Willingness to Receive the Word without Deception.

James 1:25

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. The word here for "**looks**" means to **bend over and carefully examine something from the clearest possible vantage point**. The person who looks intently at God's Word, the perfect law, the law of liberty, examines it to discover its deepest and most complete meaning. When he discovers a truth, he abides by it, understanding that this is the purpose for the Lord's revealing it to men.

12

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God did not reveal His Word simply to be learned, but to be obeyed and applied. The key to James's analogy is this: The faithful hearer and doer of the Word does not study the mirror itself but rather what the mirror reveals. The Word reveals , God's will and truth.

13

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The **law is perfect because Scripture is inerrant and encompasses all of God's revealed Word**. But by referring to it as **law**, James gives particular emphasis on the Lord's commands to men. God expects a genuine and positive response of obedience to His commands.

By referring to the Word as the **law of liberty**, James focused on its redemptive power in freeing believers from the bondage of sin and then freeing them to righteous obedience (John 8:34–36). It allows us to serve God not out of fear or mere sense of duty, but out of gratitude and love.

14

A Willingness to Receive the Word without Deception.

James 1:26

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless.

Moving away from the analogy of the mirror, James makes clear that the doer of the Word is not simply someone who is involved in religious activity. James 1:26 states, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless."

15

A Willingness to Receive the Word without Deception.

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Religious refers "to external religious rituals, liturgies, routines, and ceremonies." Such external things have no spiritual value in themselves apart from true saving faith. The person who trusts in those outward things sooner or later will expose his faithlessness with his mouth, because he does not have the inner power to bridle his tongue. Trusting in those things to please God and receive His blessing are deceptive and worthless.

Religion that does not transform the heart, and thereby the tongue, is totally worthless in God's sight.

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So What ...

It is not enough to know truth and doctrine, one must live what one believes.

Obedience to God's Word is a declaration of our Faith to the Author of Scripture.

What you are on the inside cannot remain hidden. Eventually it will be exposed. Lets each of us allow the Word of Scripture to bath our hearts and minds.

We need to commit ourselves to being Doers of the Word and not Hearers only!