

Doers of the Word

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”
James 1:22

Introduction:

1. There can be no comfort in mere hearing, for Jesus warned, “Take heed therefore how ye hear” (Luke 8:18).
2. Many are called, but few are chosen; many hear the sound of the words, but do not understand and obey.
3. To whom much is given, much shall be required; therefore it is our incumbent duty to apply this lesson.
4. The prior context laid the foundation of regenerated children needing to work God’s righteousness (1:18-20).
5. These are absolutely regenerated brethren, whom James is pressing to obey the gospel to please God.

Verse 21

1. The “wherefore” draws a further result from regeneration (1:18) and God’s righteousness (1:20).
2. To work the righteousness of God, you must live a holy life and receive God’s word with meekness.
3. There is something we are to lay apart – or get rid of by putting distance between ourselves and it.
 - a. We set apart things to avoid – menstruating women under Moses (Lev 15:19; 18:19; Eze 22:10).
 - b. We set apart things that are to be treated differently – as the animals for sacrifice (Exodus 13:12).
 - c. If we carefully analyze words, this is stronger than putting off our sins (Eph 4:22; Col 3:8-9).
 - d. Peter used similar wording in a similar context of holiness as necessary to learning (I Pet 2:1-3).
 - e. To run the Christian race we must lay aside every weight and our most tempting sins (Heb 12:1).
 - f. Only a pure mind is suitable and ready to receive the gospel of Jesus and delight in it (II Pet 3:1).
4. We have three words we need to define to properly understand this first verse in our chosen passage.
 - a. **Filthiness.** Moral corruption or pollution; obscenity, vileness, wickedness.
 - b. We must cleanse, or wash, our flesh and spirit, of all filthiness, for God to receive us (II Cor 7:1).
 - c. **Superfluity.** More than is needed, excessive; extravagance or immoderate indulgence.
 - d. We had our fill of sin in the past, when we went to excess; now we are different (I Pet 4:3-5).
 - e. Let us consider wisely here: is there some naughtiness not superfluous? No, it is all superfluous!
 - f. **Naughtiness.** Moral badness or wickedness; bad, wrong, blameworthy, improper; waywardness.
 - g. The transgressions of the wicked will take and destroy them in their own naughtiness (Pro 11:6).
 - h. Clearly stated here is the necessary prerequisite of holiness for fruitful hearing (John 7:17).
5. There is something we are to receive with meekness – or accept in a humble way of submission.
 - a. The action of receiving is reaching forth to take something that is available or offered for taking.
 - b. Doing it with meekness is rejecting any self-protection or resentment of negative consequences.
 - c. **Meekness.** Free from haughtiness and self-will; piously humble and submissive.
 - d. Here is the fulfillment of a precious proverb describing the beauty of an obedient ear (Pr 25:12).
6. The engrafted word must be received with meekness as a corollary and extension of laying apart sin.
 - a. **Engrafted.** To graft in; to insert. *transferred.* To set firmly in. *figurative.* To implant in the mind.
 - b. Which word is engrafted in us? The written word, the law of God, not the living Word of 1:18.
 - c. Paul told the Romans it was in them; he told the Hebrews it was in them (Rom 10:8; Heb 8:10).
 - d. The Old Testament addressed the ears; the New Testament is in the heart (II Corinthians 3:3-6).
 - e. This word is obviously the Scriptures, as written and preached by looking and hearing (1:22-25).
7. This engrafted word can save our souls, if we receive it with meekness and do it, as our verses teach.
 - a. The holy brethren addressed were already born again by the living Word of God (1:2,16,18,19).
 - b. We are born again here to work out our salvation that He worked in (Eph 2:10; Phil 2:12-13).
 - c. This salvation is strictly from error and sin, as James plainly tells us later in his epistle (5:19-20).
 - d. The salvation under consideration is the righteous manifestation of God’s regenerate creatures.
 - e. And salvation from error and sin is most surely a salvation from death (Luke 15:24; I Tim 5:6).
 - f. Receiving is hearing and doing, and it reveals us as children of God (Luke 6:35 cp I John 3:10).

Verse 22

1. There is no profit in hearing only, as Paul blasts the Jews for pride by hearing (Romans 2:1 – 3:19).
2. Jesus corrected their false impression of salvation by the mere possession of Scripture (John 5:39).
3. The devil will give a man confidence in hearing, to keep him from doing, which neuters his religion.
4. The deception is believing that hearing is evidence of life and will save a man from error and sin.
5. Consider the parable of the sower: three types of ground heard and rejoiced, but they were fruitless.
6. James compares in this verse “hearers only” and hearers and doers, for hearing is needed for doing.
7. It is nothing to receive God or His Word by faith without works, as James will prove (2:14-26).
8. Your lack of doing, lack of fruit, and lack of works does not deceive God or good men, just yourself.
9. Hearing without doing brings deception as to evidence of salvation (1:22,26 cp 2:14-26; Rom 2:13).

Verse 23

1. Those who hear the Word of God without obeying are like a man beholding his face in a mirror.
2. While they may not have had glass mirrors as we today, they polished metals to reflect like glass.
3. Being in the presence of the preaching of the Word of God is like looking at your face in a mirror.
4. The first part of improving appearance is done – you see blemishes and things needing straightening.
5. Bible preaching is to identify and expose error and sin of any sort in the lives of every single hearer.
6. Paul made war at hearers – to cast down imaginations and thoughts contrary to God (II Cor 10:3-6).
7. Showing God’s people their sins is the work of the ministry (Is 58:1). It is a game to some (Is 58:2).
8. Nine times each week, not counting personal exhortations and correspondence, you are shown spots.
9. Consider for illustration the blemishes (errors and sins) identified this past week on your face.
 - a. Sunday a.m. was the parable of the sower – showing the blemish of hearing without fruitfulness.
 - b. Sunday p.m. was the example of Jesus refusing to tempt God – showing the ways we tempt God.
 - c. Monday was Proverbs 29:21 – exposing overbearing and harsh authority as foolish and wrong.
 - d. Tuesday was Proverbs 30:33 – exposing the danger and sin of pursuing anger in relationships.
 - e. Wednesday was Proverbs 1:31 – exposing the dysfunction, pain, and trouble caused by sin.
 - f. Wednesday night warned of self-love – wicked selfishness defying the second commandment.
 - g. Thursday was Proverbs 2:18 – exposing the danger of sexual sins and the result of death and hell.
 - h. Friday was Proverbs 3:11 – exposing the wrong way to bear adversity and chastening from God.
 - i. Saturday was Proverbs 4:2 – reproving lazy fathers and ministers regarding their teaching duties.

Verse 24

1. The man who hears without doing is like a man seeing his blemishes but going away and forgetting.
2. Rather than washing his face, combing his hair, brushing his teeth, and etc., he blows out the door!
3. He rushes off to an important interview or some sales calls in his pajamas and his hair on end!
4. The three grounds ascribed fruitlessness to lack of attention, little strength, and worldly attractions.
5. Though he heard and saw his sins identified and exposed by the preaching, he goes out in security.
6. He forgets that he has some serious problems, which will cause him disgrace and shame eventually.

Verse 25

1. Continuing his practical analogy of looking in a mirror, James described a blessed doer of the Word.
2. He used the word “looketh” as part of the analogy, but it refers to reading and hearing the gospel.
3. The perfect law of liberty is none other than the inspired Scriptures, conveying the glorious gospel.
4. The New Testament is a law, but in contrast to the Old Testament, it is a law of liberty (Gal 5:1).
5. It is continuing – a theme we must raise again – that marks true disciples (John 8:31; Heb 12:1).
6. Continuing in this context is opposite of forgetting – being convicted for a moment but without fruit.
7. This man shall be blessed in his deed – this approach and result of hearing preaching will be blessed.
8. The man will have God’s blessings of strength, assurance, salvation, and the peaceful life of saints.

Verse 26

1. James has three tests of true religion and the fruitfulness of being doers of God's word: here is one.
2. James quickly went after sins of the tongue, which is a main feature of his epistle (1:19; 3:2-12).
3. How does a man seem to be religious? He attends church, brings a Bible, and hears the preaching.
4. How does a man seem to be religious? He spouts doctrine, is willing to pray, and condemns others.
5. It is vain religion – the form of godliness without power – when we approach God without works.
6. The same deceit described earlier (1:22) is here again – a man measuring salvation by false criteria.
7. Here is temperance – self-discipline and self-denial – in using your tongue: a common Bible theme.

Verse 27

1. James has three tests of true religion and the fruitfulness of being doers of God's word; here are two.
2. Here is pure religion – it is not hearing, reading, or quoting – it is maintaining charity and purity.
3. Appropriate name-dropping is helpful: James reminds us our religion is before God our Father.
4. Visiting the fatherless and widows in their difficulties and helping them is the pure religion of Jesus.
5. Keeping yourself unspotted from the world – not even allowing a spot – is the pure religion of Jesus.
6. These two tests include all aspects and matters of Christian charity and personal piety and purity.
7. He later blasted friendship with the world as spiritual adultery and indicating hatred of God (4:4).

Conclusion:

1. To whom much is given, much is required; therefore it is our incumbent duty to pay heed to this lesson.
2. We are deceived and profane hypocrites, if we hear the precious word of God without obeying it carefully.
3. Use your nine or more opportunities each week to find at least one spot in your life and correct it that day.