

James 1:22-25
Be Doers of the Word

INTRODUCTION

People of God, because of technology, we have the great blessing of having free and unrestricted access to incredible amounts of Christian content.

The Canon+ app is a good resource to use, but it is far from being the only place where a Christian can find good teaching. The amount of solid Christian teaching that is at your fingertips through the use of your phone or computer, is truly incredible.

If you are not filling your mind with Christian content, you are probably not growing in your faith. For faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.

However, there is a danger in being a mere consumer of Christian content. Listening to endless hours of the Bible, and Christian podcasts, sermons, books, etc., can lead one into a false sense of spiritual security. **We can deceive ourselves into thinking that the blessing of hearing the word, is the same thing as being a blessed doer of the word.**

Psalm 1 teaches us that the blessed man is he who delights in and meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. Meditation in the biblical sense is different than meditation in the Eastern Buddhist or Hindu sense. Eastern Meditation is emptying your mind of all thoughts to become one with the universe.

Biblical meditation is filling your mind with the word of God, and thinking about how you can put it into practice. Meditation on the word of God is meant to help you do what the word of God teaches. Thus Psalm 1 says that the blessed man who

delights and meditates on the law of the Lord shall be blessed in whatever he does.

DOER OF THE WORD

James warns us not to deceive ourselves into thinking that we can be blessed by simply hearing the word of God without actually doing what it says.

In verse 22, he instructs us to be doers of the word and not just hearers, as this will lead to self-deception. This is important because in verse 18, it is stated that God brought us forth by the word of truth.

In verse 19, James tells us to be quick to hear how God's word applies to us and slow to apply it to others. We should aim to be more like young Samuel, who said, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears," and less like Peter, when he said, "But what about this man?"

James also advises us to be slow to anger, as human anger does not produce the righteousness of God. In verse 21, he urges us to receive with meekness the implanted word, which can save our souls.

In verse 26, he warns that anyone who thinks they are religious but does not control their tongue is deceiving themselves and their religion is worthless.

In the immediate context, James emphasizes that being a doer of the word primarily means refraining from sinful speech. Someone whose heart is filled with anger, hatred, bitterness, and wickedness, and who speaks such words, cannot do what God's word says, nor can they hear God speak in the word.

Therefore, those who hear the word but do not act on it are spiritually deaf. To be a true hearer of the word, we must be doers of the word, which means keeping our speech free of vile and wicked words that stir up strife, violence, and discord.

However, being a doer of the word also means more than just refraining from evil speech. In Matthew 7:24, Jesus teaches that whoever hears His words in the Sermon on the Mount and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on a rock.

Therefore, let us not be hearers only but doers of the word. If we only hear the word and do not act on it, we deceive ourselves into believing that we are living a righteous life.

SELF-DECEPTION

James then explains self-deception by saying that if someone hears the word but doesn't act on it, they're like a person who looks at their reflection in a mirror and then forgets what they look like. But those who study and follow the perfect law of liberty, and not just listen and forget, will be blessed in their actions.

When you wake up in the morning, one of the first things you do is look in the mirror. What do you see? You see that your hair is messy, you have sleep in your eyes, your breath is smelly, there are creases on your face from the sheets, you have a bit of a spaghetti stain on your mouth, and there's dirt on your cheek from work the day before. In short, you see that your morning face is a mess. You realize that you need to clean yourself up before you go outside.

However, if you only hear the word and don't act on it, James says that you're like someone who walks away from the mirror and

forgets what they look like. You go about your day as if nothing is wrong with your appearance.

This is self-deception because you deceive yourself by thinking that you're fine the way you are when you're not. You judge your progress in the Christian life against yourself, which is a faulty standard. You pretend that you have everything under control, but in reality, you're a spiritual mess.

Spiritual self-deception is linked to a lack of self-honesty. The word of truth has not been implanted in the heart of someone who forgets what they look like in the mirror. James encourages us not to judge ourselves by our own standards.

The purpose of looking in a mirror is to identify areas for improvement, where you need to freshen up and fix yourself. James commands you then to look outside of yourself and toward the perfect law of liberty to determine what you should look like, and how you should live.

THE PERFECT LAW

Therefore James says:

But the man 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 his doing.

James encourages us to look into the perfect law, or the *telos* law, and continue in it. The perfect law, the *telos* law, is contrasted with your *genesis* face. What is the perfect law of liberty? It is the Law of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

When we talk about *telos*, we are talking about the end, or goal for which something is created. It's a complete state of being. For example, Ephesians 4 says that we are all *to come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the son of God to a perfect man, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

The *telos*, or perfection that we are to mature and grow up into is Christ. And we mature into him by looking into the perfect law of liberty. Remember, we have been brought forth by the word of truth so that we can be doers of the law of liberty.

The sermon on the Mount is the perfect law of liberty which Christ preached revealing how to perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect, which perfects us like Him when we do it. So direct your spiritual eyes to the perfect law of liberty, and not to yourselves.

For when we compare ourselves to what we see there, and we move from hearing to doing, we will move away from our looking at our morning face, which deceive us, and to the perfect face of Christ, which sets us free. Looking to Christ will change you. And you must be changed. For you must be born again.

Once you are truly born again by the word of truth implanted into your hearts you will indeed be blessed in your doing.

But when you walk contrary to Christ's perfect law of liberty in disobedience and sin, being hearers only, and not doers who act, you are not at liberty, you are enslaved.

Deceiving ourselves by hearing only, without doing restricts, hinders, and prevents you from doing what God created you to do because you are not being who God intended you to be. The one who is not born again, is self-deceived.

Jesus warns us at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about the consequences of this spiritual deception, being a hearer and not a doer. He says:

²⁶ *“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

SELF-DECEPTION EXEMPLIFIED

I'd like to spend the remainder of my time this morning warning you about ways in which you can be a deceived hearer, and not a doer, and thus contribute to your own spiritual downfall:

1. **Hypocrisy:** A person may deceive himself by publicly endorsing the teachings of the Bible but fail to live up to the most basic teachings in private. For instance, a man might condemn adultery but engage in extramarital affairs himself. Or he may rail against the evils of socialism, but he is himself engaged in all kinds of stealing.

A person might deceive himself and be guilty of hypocrisy by promoting the keeping of one part of the Law of God, that is relatively minor, but is openly breaking other parts of the law that Jesus referred to as the weightier matters of the law. Jesus called that straining gnats and swallowing camels.

These people deceive themselves by thinking their righteousness consists of their small minute obedience, like taking care of homely duties, and thinking that is somehow sufficient to cover over the massive gaping hole of hatred, disrespect, and verbal abuse they

have toward their spouse. Being only a hearer of the law can lead to the self-deception of hypocrisy.

2. Fault Finder. Another common way for people to deceive themselves by being a hearer only is **by focusing on the faults of others**. The Devil's Dictionary defines a Christian as follows:

“One who believes the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor.”

Focusing on the faults of others is a defense mechanism that people often use to avoid confronting their own sins and spiritual faults. By pointing out the faults of others, usually using words like, “You always do this!” or “You never do that!” they are really just masking and diverting attention away from their own sinful behavior. Which is what they ought to be more concerned about. Take the plank out of your own eye before you take the speck out of another's.

Beware of words like ‘always’ and ‘never,’ because, first off, they are not true. And secondly, because they come from a spirit of accusation, and therefore are of the Devil, who is the accuser. The person who yells at their spouse saying, “You always do this, and you never do that,” is an accuser, is self-deceived, and is projecting onto their spouse what they are in reality.

It is significantly easier to blame another person for their faults, than to take responsibility and accountability for your actions and faults.

A person might think, “If people find out what I have done, then it'll be the end of me.” But coming to the end of you is the goal. Only those who die to themselves will be raised to newness of life.

God only raises the dead. So die to yourself, confess your sins honestly, stop blame-shifting and projecting your sins and faults onto others, and come clean. Christ will forgive you.

3. Another way to deceive yourself is through **Spiritual complacency**: Here I want to aim directly at teenagers and young adults. It is easy for you to overestimate your spiritual maturity simply because you may have attended church since birth. You may even convince yourself that merely attending church services is enough to be a good Christian.

But if you are not personally engaged in reading and hearing the word on your own, and if you are not meditating on how to practice that word outside of worship on Sundays, you may be deceiving yourselves.

Those of you who have graduated and are trying to figure out what you are supposed to do with your life, while you are patiently waiting for Mr. or Miss Right to come along, you cannot afford to be complacent in your Christian faith. Your minds are consumed with thoughts about clothes, cars, make-up, boys, girls, video games, music, friends, work, and school.

But right now is a perfect time for you to focus on your faith in Christ. Study the Bible. Learn about your faith and make it your own.

One day very soon you could be married and with a child, and you are going to need to know what to teach that child. You better figure it out yourself now while you have the free time. Because life doesn't get easier once you get married and have kids.

You should be in a place right now where you are hearing the word, and thinking about how that is going to affect your long-term faithfulness.

A teenager might sit through thousands of sermons, and never once think of listening to how the sermon applies to him or her, and how they are responsible before God to take ownership of their own faith and put it into living practice.

And this person never grows in their faith because they never thought they needed to. Because they were spiritually complacent and trusted in their parents' faith, instead of making it their own.

But it is time for you to take ownership of your faith. And this goes back to what I said during announcements. Sunday School should not normally be an optional thing for you. Hanging out with your friends and talking about the everyday things of life can wait 45 minutes till after Sunday School is over.

The teachings that are given during Sunday School are important and are meant to help you grow more deeply in your faith, so you can love Christ more truly. It is time for you to take your faith seriously and start to ask questions, start to read the word, read or listen to some books, and make your parents' faith your faith, and your parents' God your God.

CONCLUSION

So, we need to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. We need to be aware of the dangers of self-deception that come along with being hearers only, dangers such as Hypocrisy, Fault-finding, and Spiritual Complacency.

But those who are quick to hear and continue to apply the whole word of God to their life will be blessed in their doing.

Those who find fault with themselves first, and do not accuse their brethren, will be blessed in their doing.

Those who do not take the grace of God for granted, but who continue to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and find ways to live out their faith, and make it their own will be blessed in their doing.

So go forth and be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only.
Amen.