

Text James 1:22-25

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 who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Pray

Main Point

When the doing of the Word gets though, the doer of the Word gets going.

Introduction (300)

Hook

You all know the saying, “When the going gets though, the though get going”

And of course, we like to think that we are the though one in our own field:

- That mountain we clime shows how though we are.
- The load of wood we chop shows how strong we are.
- That riddle you solve shows how clever you are.
- That garment you sewed shows how skilled you are.

Whatever the realm is, Thought times, challenges, draws a line between those who persevere and those who give up. Draws a line between the though and the weak.

Now many of us are all too happy to be considered weak in certain fields. We have no intention of getting going when the going get's tough. We are happy to say "when the going get's tough, the though go fishing" , as I saw on a bumper sticker.

But there is field, where we are all called to get going, even when it get's tough.

In light of our passage I want to change the saying a little. Instead of "When the going get's tough, the though get going"

I want us to think about

When the doing of the Word gets though, the Doer of the Word get's going.

Outline

We are going to think about this idea, this saying, by asking ourselves three questions, three questions which will form the outline of our time together:

1. Are you a Doer or a Hearer Only?
2. Do you Persevere or Forget?
3. Are you Blessed or Deceived?

Part 1 – Are you a Doer or a Hearer Only?

Explanation - Context

So, let us begin with our first section: Are you a Doer or a Hearer Only?

It is key to remember that James is writing to people who are in the midst of trials. Things are getting tough. The future does not look bright.

So even as we begin, think of these words from James in light of the trial you are facing.

- The pain you are bearing.
- The grief you are experiencing.
- The uncertainties before you.
- The objects of anxiety that will cross your path.

Up to this point James has given us various instructions in the face of trials. Each instruction pushing back against a natural response. Each time pointing our eyes to God. Each time helping us see who we are and who God is.

Think back at what James has already covered:

- We are to rejoice because of what God is doing in us through the trial.
- We are to turn to God in prayer and ask for wisdom in the trial.
- We are to rely on God, not on money or material wealth.
- We are to take responsibility for our sinful desires, not blame the righteous God when we sin (or anyone else for that matter)
- We are not to deceive ourselves about God's goodness, even in the trial.
- We are to be slow to anger and quick to listen, even when the trial makes that the last thing we feel like doing...

All of these instructions are not natural to us. Especially not when we face trials and difficulty.

But, as we saw last week, something has changed. We are no longer mere “Natural Humans”. The Word has been implanted in us. We have been brought from death to life by the word of truth.

We are changed and now able to see, obey and love God in the midst of the trial and in all of life.

Last week, in verse 21, we saw that we are to “*receive with meekness the implanted word*”.

In these few verses vs 22-25 James elaborates what it means to receive the word.

Explanation - Doer of the word is more than action

And so in verse 22 we read:

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

First, let us think about what it means to be a “Doer of the Word” and what it does not mean.

For one it does **not** mean that we are to constantly be doing Christian actions.

This is not a command to be busy or to fill our schedule to the max.

The emphasis here is actually on who you **are**, rather than what you do.

The key verb is “**be**”. “Doers of the word” is the descriptive noun, the thing we are to be. **Be** doers of the word. Be word doers. Or you could say “Be people of the book”.

A doer of the word is not someone who does some Christian work. A doer of the word is a person

characterised by living out the bible in all of their life. It includes all aspects of the person.

- Their belief
- Their desires
- Their thought
- Their action

Illustration – Builder vs Handy man

Think of the difference between a person who does some building work compared to a Builder. A builder, believes, desires, thinks and acts in certain ways that only builders do. You can see it in the way they analyse every building and are keen to get things done. It is not without reason that we can generalise and say “a builder’s house is never finished...” Being a builder will affect every part of your life. But if I build a deck or do some carpeting, that does not make me a builder...

Illustration explained

So when James says “Be a doer of the Word” he is calling people to let the word of God take effect in every part of their being and their life. He is calling people to be a certain kind of person, not simply do certain kind of things.

He is calling for radical obedience that begins in our **belief** flows into our **desires**, informs our **thoughts** and directs our **actions**.

So yes being a “doer of the word” includes actions, but much more than that too.

It is an obedience to the Word of God that involves the complete person.

It describes a radically different person. One brought from life to death (v18) and one who has the word implanted in them (v21)

Application - Still need to be active in listening

And there is nothing passive in being word doers, and it begins with hearing the word of God, studying it and meditating on it.

Some believe since we have the word of God written on our hearts, since it has been implanted within us, this means we **do not** need to study, meditate, and sit under the preached word. But this is far from the truth.

Illustration - Hearers only

We are to be hearers of the Word. But not hearers **only**.

In the same way that to be a builder, you need to be taught about building, to be a doer of the word you must hear it, but that is just the first step.

Being a “hearer only” would be like being an auditor in a class.

They sit there, they hear the words and the content being taught, but it is going in one ear and out the other. They only care for the manner and the style of the teacher. They have no assignments to submit or tests to sit.

- No note taking,
- no interest,
- no internalisation,
- nor any interaction with the content.

They are hearers only.

Application – What does a word doer look like?

We, on the other hand, are to hear God's word and let that affect our beliefs, our desires, our thoughts, and our actions.

Being doers of the word is a relevant command to each of us. But let this verse also be an encouragement in the areas you are faithfully putting God's word into practice in your life, in the station God has placed you.

For example, being a doer of the word for the husband, means to lead his family well,

- taking responsibility and initiating as things need to happen.
- It means leading sacrificially,
- putting his own desires last, and the good of his wife and children first.
- It means taking responsibility to disciple and discipline his children as God requires of Him.

And similarly, wives and mothers,

- when you are caring for your children,
- when you feel like the task of disciplining and discipling your children is endless,
- when you are submitting and supporting your husband,

know that you are being "doers of the word". Know that you are persevering and not being mere listeners.

All of you are doer of the word as you:

- show love
- As you choose joy
- As you live in peace
- As you show patience,
- As you show kindness

Summary/Link

In a way there is nothing extravagant or extraordinary about this command. Obey Christ. Obey your Lord. But when we are in the midst of the trial, when things are tough, you will be all the more tempting to be hearers only, and not doers.

As we have seen there is a radical difference between, being a doer and a hearer only. And James highlights the difference for us further by their actions: One perseveres, the other forgets.

This brings us to our second part: Do you persevere or forget?

Part 2 – Do you Persevere or Forget

Exposition

Illustration – Looking at the mirror

James uses the famous illustration of the mirror to show us what one who “hears only” is like. In Verse 23 we read

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

You can picture the scenario James is painting for us. You wake up out of bed. You look in the mirror while you are brushing your teeth and wonder who that is staring back at you with hair in a mess and dogged eyes.

Then you make yourself a coffee, you do your devotions, have some breakfast and before you know it time has swept away, you are out the door on your way to church or work and you have completely forgotten what your hair looked like and have not done anything about it.

That is what a hearer only is like. They may see the problem staring right back at them, but they immediately forget it and do nothing about it.

They may hear the word preached, they may hear the word read, they may even read it themselves, but as the word reveals things about themselves and about God, it is in one ear and out the other. Their beliefs, desires, thoughts and actions are not affected by what they hear.

Doer looks into the law and perseveres

In verse 25 James gives us the contrast. He says

²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

The language of looking into a mirror is still there. We have a person who is looking into God's word, and instead of forgetting, he perseveres.

- He hears the word, listens attentively, and lets the word frame his beliefs.
- He lets the word inform his desires.
- He let's the word seep into all of his thoughts.
- And of course his actions become directed by the word.

To persevere is to hold fast to principles and choices the Word has informed and persevere in them even when you may not feel like it.

- Even when the trials of life make this difficult.
- Even when it costs you more than you originally thought.
- Even when it hurts.
- Even when the going gets tough

The doer of the word perseveres.

Application - What do you believe about God?

For example, what do you believe God is like? Right here, as we gather together with his people and we sing together in a building dedicated for that, it is easy to say God is good, kind and wise. And we are quick to affirm it.

But what about on Monday at 10:30, when your workmates are making fun of Christianity?

Or what about in the middle of Tuesday night when the baby wakes you up for the fifth time and you are at your wit's end?

It is in those moments that we need to heed James, and persevere and remember that God is good, kind and wise.

Application - What do you believe about yourself?

Or what about what you believe about yourself?

The word of God shows us how we truly are. We are sinners and God is transforming us.

- We are filthy and wicked.
- We still have evil desires that need changing.

- If we are not careful, our words do more harm than good.

Yet how quick is it to forget? How quick we are to believe we have arrived and that everyone else should quickly catchup?

How quick we are to say whatever comes to our mind without?

How slow we are to ask forgiveness and slower to give forgiveness?

In this too let us heed James's word to persevere. As the mirror of God's word shows us our sin, let us be quick to deal to it. Quick to confess and repent.

Our saviour promises us that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us.

Friends, as the Word shows us the goodness and holiness of God, and also as the Word shows us our sinfulness, let us persevere to turn to our saviour for forgiveness.

He promises to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Gospel plea

And if you have never done that yet,

- if you have never asked Jesus to take care of your sins,
- if you still feel the weight of guilt and shame of your sin,
- if you still feel the filth of sin,
- if you have yet to experience the freedom and peace of being forgiven by God,
- If you have yet to trust in Jesus as your saviour and lord

today is a good day to do that.

He promises to pay for your sin, if you would trust him and follow him, if you would cling to him as the only one who can save you.

The gift is presented to you, is yours, if you would but accept it.

Link

Friends, we have seen that the doer perseveres, but the hearer only forgets. In a way these describe the journey. There is a destination for both parties, which brings us to our final portion.

Are you blessed or deceived?

Part 3 – Are you Blessed or deceived

Explanation – Deceived of true position

You would have noticed in verse 22 that James warns us not to be hearers only, and so deceive ourselves.

Those who are hearers only think they are right with God, when it is not so.

To say you are a Christian is meaningless if you are not shaped by the Word.

This is a dead faith. Your actions will reflect what has taken place in your heart. Your actions will reflect who you are.

If you are a hearer only, you are deceiving yourself.

You are like an ostrich with your head in the sand, thinking there is no danger. Only to make an easy prey for the prowling lion.

The word we have for deceiving yourself also carries the idea of defrauding or cheating yourself. When you are a hearer only you cheat yourself of blessing. Of real blessing. God's blessing. Blessing in this life and the next. This blessing comes to the "Doers of the word".

Blessed in future

Notice the outcome of the one who is a "doer of the word". In verse 25.

"he will be blessed in his doing."

There is a future component in the "being blessed".

We look ahead to being welcomed into the house of the Lord, and praising and rejoicing in Him forever.

The doer of the word is blessed because his sins have been forgiven and he will feast at the table of the king when his time on earth is over.

Blessing in the present

But there is also a present component. Or the future component has already began should I say.

You see, as we let the word of God transform us. As we seek to Obey our Lord and saviour, we are aligning ourselves for the very purpose we were created for.

I like how James calls the Word of God the "Law of liberty".

As we obey his commands, we are truly free.

Real freedom comes from denying sinful desires, not indulging in them. As we learn what it means to love God and to love our neighbour, we are set free to do just that.

- God's law frees us to be good husbands
- Frees us to be good wives
- To be good citizens
- To build strong and safe families
- Frees us from doing harmful things to ourselves and others.

God's law frees us to find joy, satisfaction and pleasure that will last and truly satisfy.

Illustration – Piano

We can think about it like playing the piano.

A piano is great to express your joy or maybe grief through music

And if I was to sit at the piano I would be free to hit any key. But I don't know the rules of music nor do I have the skill to play them, and so I could only make noise and never express either joy or grief.

But, if I was to learn the rules of music, and apply my hand to practice the skill and come to understand the theory of music, then it would be a different story. If I learned these things then I could freely express myself on the piano. Then I would have true freedom to express my heart, be it joy or grief.

The rules have not hindered me they have enabled me. So it is too with God's law.

Application – Freedom not lack of rules

You may feel that God's law of only being allowed to have sex after marriage is restrictive on your freedom. But that is not true. On the contrary, keeping yourself pure before marriage liberates you to truly enjoy God's good gift.

Or you may feel that obeying your parents is hindering you to be all that you could be and do. But that too is not true. On the contrary they are protecting you from things that will reduce your potential. You may think a police record is a laughing matter, but your parents want to spare you from that to enable you for your full potential.

The list could go on for all of God's laws. You may not always understand how the law is setting you free, often we can know if we humbly ask, but sometimes we must trust God.

Trusting that he knows best.

Application – God's blessing

But also remembering that God's blessings are sometimes different from what we may imagine.

He knows what we need and when we need it.

His agenda is our sanctification, and his blessings help us to become like Christ.

Remember our present blessing is but a preparation, or a foretaste of the future blessing, where we will be fully enabled to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Conclusion

Friends let us heed James's plea.

Let us be doers of the word and not hearers only. Let the word have its effect on your beliefs, on your desires, on your thoughts and on your actions.

And when the going gets tough, let us persevere and not forget. Despite the difficulty and the challenge let us persevere to be Word doers. Let the challenges

show our true colours. Let the tough times show what we are truly made of. That we are new creatures empowered by the Word.

And the reward of perseverance is far greater than people knowing you are the best mountain climber, or the strongest person or the best seamstress. The reward is being blessed by God. Blessed in the life to come, but also blessed in this world as we learn to live for the very purpose we were made for. As we fulfil our ultimate purpose and find true satisfaction. As we love God and love our neighbour.

It is true that times are tough and times will get tougher, but these become opportunities to show how God is transforming us. Let the saying be true of us:

When the doing of the Word gets through, the doer of the Word gets going.

Let us pray.