

Doers Of The Word

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant 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 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. (James 1:19-25)

When God created man, as we know, He created most all of us with a reasonable amount of intellect, and for the most part, with an ability to make most of the rational decisions needful to navigate our way through the matters of our daily lives.

And not only were we created to have intellect and able to make rational choices, we were also created with an innate sense of right and wrong, able to make moral choices.

It's my personal belief that as God breathed into Adam the "breath of life" and Adam became a "living soul", Adam truly was perfect in every way. And then, as Eve was taken from Adam's side, she, being "bone of his bone" and "flesh of his flesh" was also truly perfect. And God was so pleased that He would say of His new creation that it was "very good".

But, and for reasons known only to God, in His perfect and Holy wisdom, He created mankind knowing that our "perfection" would eventually develop into "imperfection", that we would become "sinful", with our very nature becoming "corrupt".

And as we know, that devolution from "perfection" to "imperfection" did take place, there in the Garden, and that "imperfection" has been corrupting our lives and especially our moral choices ever since.

And here, in today's scripture text we see evidence of it, God having to instruct us and even to command us to

¹⁹ be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19)

Remember folks, that these words of our text are addressed to us as "beloved brothers", meaning that God is here addressing those of us who are fully "saved and sanctified", "set apart" for His purposes, and hopefully beginning to mature. But unfortunately, as words such as these imply, our maturity needs some help, we are still needful of very strong and deliberate instruction.

Put simply, God is saying to us, "My child, please, please be quiet and listen to Me before you speak and before you get angry.

And then even further, having to instructs us to

²¹ put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

And even more, having to remind us to

²² be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)

And then even further, saying of us,

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. (James 1:23-24)

Again, God did create us as reasonably intelligent people, with reasonable rationale. And over the years that we have sat in these pews, we have heard with our ears and we have seen with our eyes God's written word. But even so, for some reason, we intelligent and rational people are still just "not getting it"!

These words reminded me of a study that I did recently of one of Jesus' more well-known parables, often referred to as the "Parable of the Sower". In that parable, Jesus spoke about the various kinds of soils that exist within the souls of men and women.

There in that parable, Jesus spoke about a farmer who was sowing seeds in various kinds of soils. And as he sowed, some of his seeds fell on rocky soil, and birds quickly ate them up. Other of the seeds fell on pathways and could not take root, so the plants quickly died away. Other of the seeds fell among thorns, and coming up, the plants were choked and suffered and bore very little fruit. But other seeds fell on good soil and were very successful.

The disciples, recognizing that the meaning of the parable was difficult to understand, asked Jesus why He taught the people in that manner, using the “figurative language” of parables rather than just speaking to them with simpler, more easy-to-understand words.

And the answer that Jesus gave has left some evangelicals confused and wondering. Jesus answered His disciple’s question saying,

11. . . "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. (Matthew 13:11)

And then, He went on to say,

13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. (Matthew 13:13-14)

Those are curious, but very profound words . . . though “hearing” they could not “hear”, and “seeing”, they could not “see”! Folks, simply put, a “vital” element was somehow missing from their ability to truly and clearly grasp the “spiritual truth” that was being given to them.

And as I read the scripture text that we are examining here in this Book of James, it seems that a very similar effect is taking place. Here, the Lord is saying to us . . .

22 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. (James 1:22-24)

There are many people today, just as in the days of Jesus, that see, read and hear these precious truths given in these scriptures, but hearing they do not really hear, and seeing they do not really see. Yes, the words enter into their ears, even into their thought processes, but the meanings of those words somehow get lost within the “noise” of the worldly activity around them.

Just as in this “Parable of the Sower”, the soil of the souls of so many, many people today is hard and dry and rocky and thorn infested, keeping the hearts and minds of the people from truly hearing and truly seeing. And the precious meaning of the truths of these scriptures is choked out and unable to bear much fruit.

And unfortunately, even we who have Christ, who are truly and eternally saved, will often, fall into this same quagmire.

The American worldview and the culture that surrounds us, captivate our minds and our souls, darkening our vision and blocking out the “Voice” that cries out from the pages of these scriptures. And as a result, “seeing we do not see”, and “hearing we do not hear”.

But thanks be to God, for us who have Christ, though we do not see clearly, and we do not hear clearly, the “voice” of God is still speaking forth from these pages. And here with these words, God is both warning us and calling us to “lean into Him”, to “draw near to Him” and let the listening of our hearts be open to His Voice.

Many evangelicals today tell us that what we have to do is simply “let go and let God”, or as that contemporary song refrained, let “Jesus take the wheel”. And yes, there is a sense in which that is true. But folks, within that “letting go and letting God”, we must also remember that it really is God’s plan that you and I would do as He is telling us here and also put forth our own “full and best effort” and be “doers”.

As we know, God really could do as He did in the beginning, just “speak” all the activities of His people into being. But, as we know, He doesn’t do it that way. Since those first days of creation, God has used men and angels to carry out His plan. And He is doing that today with you and me. He has commanded us to “Go Ye” and we must “go”. And as He has commanded us here, we must become more than just “hearers” of His Word, we must become “doers” of His Word!

We, you and I, need to step on forward and begin to “do” the part within God’s plan that He has assigned to us. Recall from the messages given over the past several weeks, that for you and me who have Christ as our Savior, our lives have now been dramatically “changed”. We are now, as Romans 8 tells us, “Sons of God”. We have been adopted into God’s family, and we now have family responsibilities that we never had before.

And in verse 17 of James 1, God has reminded us that He has given us every “good and perfect gift” to equip us to do those things, to be “doers” of everything that He has called us to do.

But still, here in verse 23, God continues to warn us . . .

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. (James 1:23-25)

One can’t help but note that even as God gives an encouraging word in verse 25, He still knows the “bent” of our nature, our propensity towards instant distraction, to “look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s truth, and then immediately turn around and forget everything we just saw.

And again, do not these words sound so very similar to the warning given concerning the hearers of the Parable of the Sower, a kind of hearing, but not hearing, seeing but not seeing.

But for us who have Christ, us who have “eyes to see and ears to hear”, these words encourage us, and even demand of us, that we change the way and the manner of our life habits and behaviors, change completely, and begin to go in a whole different direction.

We’re being told here that we must stop our old habits of just perhaps doing our “obligatory morning devotions”, or perhaps quickly reading through some scriptures, often passing thoughtlessly over the Words, not taking the time to pause to absorb their real impact and the seriousness of their meaning.

Folks, yes, having knowledge of these scriptures and even being able to speak them back out has some value. But unless and until we are willing to “do” something with the things we have learned, they are of very little value, especially in this matter of “producing the righteousness of God”.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, God ponders the value of the “wisdom of the worldly wise”, well-educated people, often of high standing among men. But there, God is clear. Most of the world’s knowledge will eventually fade away as “wood, hay and stubble”. Only, those things that “produce the righteousness of God” will remain.

Here in our text, God is specifically addressing you and me, His adopted children, and telling us that we must go beyond the “wisdom of the world”. We must listen and hear and see His real truth and get on about “producing His righteousness”.

And in verse 21 God gives another of His perfect analogies by using the word “implanted”. Here, He tells us that we must

21 put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

Folks, this “implanted word” is powerful if we will just let it do its work. It’s process is the same process as “grafting”, just as a farmer who “grafts” a branch into tree, with that branch then becoming a forever part of that tree.

For us, once God’s Words of truth have been “grafted” into our hearts, our souls, our minds, and into our memories, like that branch, His Word will no longer be just “knowledge”, it will actually become a part of who we are, of our very being, our behaviors, our habits and our lifestyle.

But how do we begin to do our part to allow that to truly take place within us? Think with me about what God is saying in these words. How is God’s Word “grafted”, “implanted” into our minds and hearts? Is it something that is done by us, by you and me?

This is so very special in my thinking folks. This is when God get very personal and intimate and hands-on with you and me. Yes, we ourselves must do our part. We must read and study and memorize these scriptures daily. But if we stopped there, these Words would be nothing more than knowledge. And we would be nothing more than “hearers who do not really hear and seers who do not really see”.

But with God’s own Divine Hand carefully implanting and interweaving His precious truths as we read them and hear them, the words become an actual part of who we are, of our hearts, of our souls, of our minds and eventually a part of our behaviors and habits, enabling us to be “doers” of His word.

It is as intimate and as real as that moment there in the Garden when Jesus took Adam’s face in His hands and breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life.

He is doing the same with you and me, breathing His breath of life into us through these words! And as we have said over and over again, these words are so very, very powerful and filled with life.

12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

With the power of God’s Word within us, we really can

22 . . . be doers of the word, and not hearers only . . . (James 1:22)

One last thought before we close. As we read these precious words, we must envision all that God is doing. Remember that He is our loving Father, and we are His beloved sons. And in these precious words, He is “homeschooling us”, teaching us how to be “true sons of God”.

I’m reminded of incidents in my own family, when we would be attempting to teach our own children something important. As we would talk and instruct them, we could sometimes see from the absent look in their eyes that their minds had gone somewhere else. And sometimes, no matter how hard we would try, we couldn’t seem to get their full attention.

I can recall with one of our dear sons, how his mind seemed to always have more than one thought going on. And I could hold his little face in my hands and say to him over and over, look at me as I talk to you. But invariably, even then, his little eyes would drift off to the side. And not so much in deliberate disobedience or rebellion, it was just the way his little mind processed the things that were taking place.

And so it is often with us and God. Too often, we are doing what our culture calls “multitasking”. And our attention becomes divided.

And how many times has God taken our face into His loving hands and said, as He is saying here, “look at Me as I talk to you”. “Have ears to hear and eyes to see”! But folks, even then, our little eyes and our little minds will drift off to something else. And again, not necessarily in deliberate disobedience or rebellion. It’s just the way our “little minds” process the things of our day.

But here, God, our loving Father, has our face in His hands and is saying to us, “listen my child,

22 . . . 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. (James 1:25-27)

May we pray!