

A Faith That Works: Be A Doer (James 1:22-25)

Lead-in

Today we continue a new series called *A Faith That Work* in the book of James. This book embedded within the NT written by the half-brother of Jesus, is packed full of practical action. God wants you to **work out your faith because faith in Jesus works**.

What we encounter today is one of James' primary concerns. He deeply desires that people of God have an active and not dead faith, faith that changes your life. I believe that James is burdened when he looks at the church and can't tell if some are dead or playing dead.

Several weeks ago, there was a dead opossum on our road. Seeing the animal, my children wanted to give it a proper burial. So, I took my 4 yr. old daughter, grabbed a shovel, jumped in the golf cart and ventured down the hill. Now I knew the opossum was there for at least several hours. But as we closed in, I also knew that opossums are famous for "playing dead" and that it could wake up and rip my throat out. So, I found a longer stick, and pushed it off the cliff (so much for a proper burial).

I believe James is looking at the church and sees some that are dead, some that are playing dead, and some that are alive. James is saying, get out of the road and be a Doer!

Be A Doer- James 1:22-25

Ready: You work from salvation not for it (1:21). Here is the ready-set- go of the Gospel. You must 1st receive the good news, then you are saved, then you do. This is the eternal order. Anything outside of God's design is deception. You cannot be saved apart from the Word of Christ and you can't live out your faith without first being saved (faith).

This was of utmost concern for James because he lived with Jesus. He often heard the words of the Messiah. He experienced the power of the Son of Man. But was it not until the resurrection that we find James following Jesus as Messiah. This is James screaming: believe! It is true! **Receive the Word!**

Set: You work from salvation not for it (1:22). A great lie of the enemy is that Jesus will save you but he won't change you, at least not until you get to heaven. James

obliterates this thought. When you receive the word (ready), when He saves your soul, you are instantly changed!

Often, we hear it correctly spoken that you can do nothing to earn your salvation. And this is eternally true! We are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone! However, the enemy distorts this eternal truth into this tempting line: if you can't work for salvation, then God will not work in and through you. There is no more damaging lie that you can believe. If Satan has lost your soul, the next best thing is to make you ineffective for the Kingdom. James is not giving a new command, he is merely echoing what Jesus said:

Matt. 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who **does** the will of my Father in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ **23** Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. **Depart from me, you lawbreakers!**’ **Matt. 7:24** “Therefore, everyone who **hears** these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

“We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” – **Luther**. God confirms His work in your heart through His work by your hands and fruit of the Spirit. Be a Doer! **You work from your salvation no for it.**

Set: the danger of proximity (1:23). James, the brother of Jesus knew better than most that being close (hearing) to Jesus does make you in (doing) Christ. Brothers, do not deceive yourselves. Deceive means to lead one astray from faith, and to deceive oneself about salvation.

Some temptations of proximity:

Head knowing w/out heart is intellectualism. It sounds nice but is cold, calculated, and prideful. Intellectualism causes others to say, “wow look how much Bible knowledge.” It causes Jesus to say, “look how empty.” Don’t deceive yourself.

Heart without head = emotionalism. It’s warm and fuzzy, wants to make an impact, sounds inclusive but lacks substance. Emotionalism is the crowd preparing the triumphal entry (Hosanna!), and then shouting crucify Him! Faith is more than a feeling! Don’t deceive yourself.

Hands w/out ears for the Gospel = legalism. It has the appearance of righteousness but is self-deceptive. Legalism says, do this! Why? Because I told you so. Legalism says, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name,' This is the danger of proximity.

Has one of these described you? James is begging, look at your life!

When you hear and never act upon the good news, you are like a man looking in the mirror. **Mirrors in the ancient world were a very different invention. Generally made of polished bronze or copper, they produced dim and warped reflections. While one could gain a good impression of oneself, one could not simply glance at such a mirror and learn much.**

What is seen in a mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial," for example, a dirty face that needs washing.

Look in the mirror, receive the implanted word which can save you today!
It is not too late to change through the power of the Savior!

Go: The Blessed life (1:25). Doing frames everything James says here in this passage. It opens the first verse and concludes the final. God wants you to know that the one who looks into the mirror and the one who looks into the Word of Christ are capable of **two different responses, remembering or forgetting.**

To remember Yahweh, his teachings, is to contemplate them in such a way that they make a **lasting impression** on the heart and mind. For the Christian, when you see the beauty of Christ you find that his word/law is perfect and freeing.

When you want your child to learn the violin or piano do you sit them down, open a manual, and instruct them on the nuances of playing? Or, do you take them to a concert and let the power and ascetic beauty of the music captivate their heart?

The one who looks and does, this person will be blessed in what he does!

Response

Response Key) Remember the opposom? I don't want Christ to return and have to ponder whether I am dead or playing dead spiritually. Let us do what He says!

The HS will not "poke you" until you wake up

Are you a doing? Are you working from your salvation?

Missionary, vocational ministry, join the local church?
Is this local church healthier because you are making an impact?
Is your family closer to Jesus today because you are a doer of faith?
Is your workplace more like Jesus because you are working out your faith?
Is your neighbor closer to seeking Christ because you are a doer of faith?

Prayer: Would you be bold enough to pray: Lord, make me a doer!

Doing: preparing your heart for the Lord's Supper

Now that you have heard this good news, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to him using words like this:

*Jesus today I **recognize** it is because of my (sin) bad actions that I need you. I **believe** Christ came to live, die and was raised from the death—to rescue me from my sin.*

***Forgive** me. I turn from me and put my trust in You.*

*I know that Jesus is Lord and King of all and I will **follow** Him.*

Notes

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

Be

Best translated be or become, and is best understood in an iterative sense, since James wishes to encourage repeated action that becomes a habit (ECNT, 89).

James calls the Christian to obey the Gospel, which in this case means primarily the ethical teaching of Jesus.

James is not giving a unique command. Rather, he is echoing what his brother Jesus already has charged:

John 14:15 “If you love me, you will keep my commands.

Matt. 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ **23** Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. **Depart from me, you lawbreakers!**’

Matt. 7:24 “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Doer

Doing frames vv. 22-25. “Doing” opens and closes the paragraph (Moo, 88).

The word, through which we are born into new life (v.18) and which becomes implanted in us (v.21), is a word that must be put into practice (Moo, 89).

If one wants the benefits of its saving power, one must also embrace it as a guide for life (Moo, 90).

Hearing/doing

Contrasts two important components of Jewish life. Hearing the Scripture read formed an essential element of religious ritual, but James here commands an aspect that was assumed but not always realized—putting the spoken word into action (ECNT, 89).

Hearers

It is not listening to the word that James opposes or diminishes, but merely listening (Moo, 88).

Deceived

James is extremely concerned that the church might not be followers of Jesus.

Deceive actually means to lead one astray from faith (NIGTC, 97). Here it means to deceive oneself about salvation.

Religious self-deception occurs in which people can be mistaken in thinking “that they are truly right with God when they really are not.” (ECNT, 89).

23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror.

Mirror

Mirrors in the ancient world were a very different invention. Generally made of polished bronze or copper, they produced dim and warped reflections. While one could gain a good impression of oneself, one could not simply glance at such a mirror and learn much. So, a person would have to “consider” carefully what one saw in a mirror. (ECNT, 90).

Martin adds that “what is seen in a mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial,” for example, a dirty face that needs washing.

24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was.

The point is that the impression is only momentary (NIGTC, 98).

25 But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does.

The success of James’ analogy presumes that both the person who looks into the mirror and the person who looks into God’s word are capable of two different Responses (Moo, 93).

Law of freedom

The law of God is perfect because it perfectly expresses his nature and because it perfectly matches ours. In His commands, the Lord has taken what is true about himself and has expressed that truth in a rule for us to obey (Motyer, 71).

Not forgetful

To remember God, his acts and his teachings, is to contemplate them in such a way that they make a lasting impression on the heart and mind (Moo, 93).

Illustrations

The gospel starts with the beauty of Christ not the law of Christ. When you want your child to learn the violin or piano do you sit them down, open a manual, and instruct them on the nuances of playing? Or, do you take them to a concert and let the power and ascetic beauty of the music captivate their heart?