

# Hearing, Doing, and Being

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**James 1:22–25 (NKJV) “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. <sup>25</sup> But he 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 what he does.”**

Hearing God's Word can be dangerous! Knowledge without obedience leads to self-deception. It is possible to be a faithful hearer but an unfaithful doer. Many people mark their Bibles but their lives have not been marked by the Word of God. Many fill churches each Sunday thinking that they are spiritual because they hear a sermon. But simply hearing a sermon does not mean a person gets credit for what they have heard. For instance, there is a difference between a formal college student and an auditing student. Auditing students pay a portion of the regular college class fee to sit and listen to the lectures without doing any of the assignments. They get the knowledge but they do not get credit. In the same way, many church attenders each week are simply auditing the church. They sit among other Christians and it feels like they are among them. They are gaining lots of knowledge about the kingdom of God but they are not doing the kingdom assignments. There is no credit given. In the kingdom of God, there are no auditors. In the kingdom of God, knowledge brings accountability. James 4:15 (NKJV) says, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

We do not want to be deceived. The problem with being deceived is that we actually believe we are not deceived. We sincerely believe something that is not true. We believe about ourselves something that we are not. In regards to the Christian faith, there are two ways of being deceived. First is *hearing* without *doing*. In this case there is no obedience. The second is *doing* without *being*. In this case, there is no relationship.

There is a difference between *hearing* and *doing*. It is not the hearers of the word that are blessed but the doers of the word that are blessed. Romans 2:12–13 (NKJV) says, “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law <sup>13</sup> (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;” It is not hearing the law that justifies a man in the sight of God but doing what the law says. In a similar way James 1:25 (NKJV) says, “But he 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 what he does.” Notice that the blessing that comes to the doer of the Word is not “for what” he does but “in what” he does. God rewards the believer on the basis of his obedience not on the basis of merit.

There is a difference between a *profession* of faith and a *possession* of faith. Consider the words of Jesus Himself: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ <sup>24</sup> Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> “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: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”<sup>1</sup> The late preacher, A.W. Tozer, said, “The Lord will not save those whom He cannot command. He will not divide His offices [i.e. Savior’ and ‘Lord’, note added]. You cannot believe on a half-Christ. We take Him for what He is—the anointed Saviour and Lord who is King of kings and Lord of all lords! He would not be Who He is if He saved us and called us and chose us without the understanding that He can also guide and control our lives.”

James refers to hearing the Word of God as looking in a mirror. One of the purposes of a mirror is for *self-examination*. The Word of God causes us to face the truth about ourselves. Hearing the Word of God reveals our true condition.

There are three mistakes people make in self-examination. First they do not carefully examine themselves. They *glance* rather than *gaze* into the mirror of God's Word: “*He observes himself and then goes away*”. Second, they forget what they see: he “*immediately forgets*”. Third, they are not impacted by the reality of their true condition. They are not impacted by the revelation of their sinful condition. This is in stark contrast to others in Scripture when they saw their sinful condition.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:21–27 (NKJV)

The prophet Isaiah said, “Woe is me, for I am undone!”<sup>2</sup> Simon Peter responded, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!”<sup>3</sup> Job declared, “I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”<sup>4</sup> The Word of God will awaken within us our desperate need for God!

The fourth mistake people make in self-examination is that they fail to obey what the Word of God tells them to do. They congratulate themselves in the practice of hearing. They imagine that hearing is the same thing as doing. They AMEN the Word but they do not AMEND their ways!

A second purpose of a mirror is for *restoration*. It is not enough to see what is wrong. The mirror is an aid in getting wrong things right. The Tabernacle of Moses was equipped with a Bronze Laver meant for washing. Interestingly it was made from the bronze mirrors given by the women. The priests washed themselves in light of the reflective surfaces of the water and the bronze laver. Why? They were about to enter into the holy presence of Almighty God. They not only needed to see their uncleanness, they needed to cleanse themselves too! Ephesians 5:26 states that we as believers are sanctified and cleansed by the washing of the water of the Word.

A third purpose of a mirror is for *transformation*. Not only does the mirror of God’s Word reveal our own reflection, but in it we also see the reflection of Jesus Christ. The mirror of God’s Word reveals the reflection of God’s glory by which we are transformed: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>5</sup> God’s Word not only reveals our true condition, it has the power to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ as we gaze upon Him within its pages.

Not only is there a difference between *hearing* and *doing*, but there is a difference between *doing* and *being*. While it is important to *do* what we *hear*, it is more important to *be* like Jesus. It is possible to do the work of a Christian without being a Christian. *Doing* without *being* is salvation by *works*. *Being*, on the other hand, is a matter of salvation based upon a relationship with God by grace through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

*Being* and *doing* is the natural outworking of a genuine relationship with God: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”<sup>6</sup> The truth is, you can’t *be* without *doing*! No one is saved by works, but everyone saved by grace will have the evidence of good works: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”<sup>7</sup> A person who has saving faith will bear the fruit of a changed life. A believer will *do* what is consistent with what they truly *are*: “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus said, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, through *hearing* the Gospel you must *become* a child of God through faith in His Word. After *becoming* a child of God you will begin *doing* in obedience the Word you have heard. Remember, it is not those who *hear* who are blessed; it is those who *do* who are blessed! *Be* both a *hearer* and a *doer*! *Be* a living example of the difference between *hearing*, *doing*, and *being*.

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6:5

<sup>3</sup> Luke 5:8

<sup>4</sup> Job 42:6

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> John 1:12–13 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:8–10 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> James 2:17–18 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 7:18–20 (NKJV)