

## James 1:22-25

As important as hearing the word of God is, obedience to its truth is vital, without it further judgment comes and your spiritual life is weak. Obedience to the word is the most basic spiritual requirement and the common denominator of all believers.

By way of example let's look at Nehemiah 8:1-3; 5-6, 8; 9:1-3; 10:28-29 and see the response, the importance and obedience to God's word. **Note:** on the premise of what happened in Nehemiah, we see the effects and obedience to God's word. Some statements from the past by men who have focused on the importance of God's word in ministries are as follows:

- God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
- Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

**Note:** those who consistently obey God's commands (His word) show evidence of being a child of God.

### 1. BE DOERS OF THE WORD

It could be translated "*be continually or keep on striving*". So when folks are blessed with regular in depth, faithful preaching or teaching of Scripture, they become affected by the Word. But they who hear the word won't be satisfied with just hearing, they will want to be doing and being obedient to what God's word says. Note: I want to say this briefly, more later but busyness does not equal spiritualness.

The context also has the idea of being a permanent doer not just a temporary doer. For teachers, preachers and others who speak from God's word, it's not a temporary status. A professional electrician does his work continually, not just a few jobs. Why? Because that's his trade. I don't ever plan on retiring from preaching or writing or teaching. I may retire from pastoral work, but never from the proclamation of His word.

### 2. NOT MERELY A HEARER

The Greek word for hearer is one who "*sits passively by in an audience listening to a singer or speaker*".

- One who audits a college class is one who sits and hears but isn't responsible for tests or knowledge.
- The church has auditors. They hear but aren't doers.

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The Scriptures give us clear evidence of true and false Christians. Some who say they are in word only, not in behavior or conduct. 1 John 3:10 "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." 2 Peter 1:10 "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble." Okay, what are "these things?" We find that out in vs. 5-9 "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."

It's not a matter of what one claims to have experienced, but how one lives in conduct and behavior in light of God's word. There are certain indications in a believers life that identifies him with Christ. And obedience to God's word is one. There is a longing to obey God's word. If you do not wish to obey and live as God's word says, then there's no change.

1 John 2:3-6 is the closest test to genuine Christianity that we can see. Also concerning false prophets and identifying them Jesus gives us these warnings in Matthew 7:15-20. **Note:** in the long run, how we behave is proof of our salvation or lostness.

### 3. LOOKING BUT FORGETTING - VS. 23-24

If one does not apply the word of God to their life and actions they actually deceive themselves. The word has the idea of false reasoning for the purpose of deceiving. It's actually a mathematical word called "miscalculation." In order to explain this deception, James uses this analogy of a man looking in a mirror and forgetting what he looked like.

The context is the hearer of the word is not a doer, but is like a person who carefully observes his natural face in the mirror, yet as soon as he's finished looking, he forgets. The point of the analogy is not the mirror but the forgetfulness. When a person, even carefully, looks at God's word and does not apply the truths to his own life, he is like someone who forgets what he looks like. He sees his sin portrayed for what it is, sees God's grace and goodness, yet he goes on his way and forgets.

### 4. LOOKING BUT APPLYING - VS. 25

The word used for intently means to examine something from the clearest possible advantage point. It is the same verb used to describe Peter's looking into the empty tomb after Jesus' resurrection.

- He looks intently at God's word and examines its deepest and complete meaning.

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- It's not a mere exercise of curiosity, as with the forgetful person.
- When he discovers a truth, he abides by it, understating this is the purpose of God's word revealed to men.
- The faithful person does not study the mirror, but what the mirror reveals, the revealed will and truth of God's word.

Where we get truth is from God's word. And as we read it, hear it, we either apply it or forget it. But the word of God is powerful. Psalms 19:7-9 "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether."

The law of liberty is the focus of the redemptive power of God's word. John 8:34-36 "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed' ". Applying the word of God and being a doer is setting you free from the bondage of sin. Romans 6:16-18 "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

Cf. Matthew 5:17-20 tells us Jesus didn't come to do away with the law of God, His law reflects His holy will and His standards for human conduct.

**Concluding thoughts:** One of most serious obstacles to salvation is man's natural aversion to serious spiritual thought. He may love to study philosophy, man-made religions and even theology. But he is not inclined to serious study of God's truth. Men aren't naturally inclined to look at themselves honestly, we always try to make ourselves look better.

The one who doesn't forget what he hears or reads is blessed. We are blessed because we are obedient to God's truth. The hearer and doer of the word of God is just as Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." So can we be honest today and ask the question, are you forgetting what you hear in the truth of God's word? Or are you applying it to shape your life and actions to reflect God's holiness and truth?