

# Be Doers of the Word – Part 2

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – the essence of true faith is to be active doers of what God’s word commands of us
2. aim – to cause us to be active in faith, recognizing who we really are before God and doing his will
3. passage – James 1:19-27

### b. outline

1. Be Quick to Listen (James 1:19-20)
2. Be Doers of the Word (James 1:21-25)
3. Be Properly Religious (James 1:26-27)

### c. opening

1. the **nature** of the letter (**i.e.** its “coarseness” or “crudeness”)
  - a. if, the letter of James was written as *one of the* (or *the*) earliest works of the N.T. (c. 45AD), then:
    1. James is writing to the most *primitive* (**i.e.** infant) church,
    2. the Christians he was writing to were (literally!) the “*firstfruits*” of the church age (**v. 18**),
    3. there is no other apostolic material from which James could draw for nuance,
    4. Paul was still “working out” how Jesus of Nazareth fit into the whole of the Tanak,
    5. James does not have the “lens” of the apostolic writing through which to make his points,
    6. therefore, his approach to theological matters is going to much “cruder” than the apostles
      - a. which explains why this letter took so long to be embraced by the church – the language seems “inconsistent” with the apostolic corpus, and it took time to see its value
  - b. so, we need to take this “crudeness” into consideration when attempting to understand the *thesis* of the letter – James uses a “sledgehammer” to make his point, whereas the apostles are more “thorough” and “subtle” in their approach (**e.g.** “*shall live by faith*” in **Romans 1-8**)
2. the **outline** of the letter
  - a. James’ statement in **1:22** is the **thesis** of the entire work: “*be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*”
  - b. the **tendency** within us: to “disconnect” what we *believe* from what we *do*; the “natural” condition of the flesh whereby we tend to think one way but act another (**a self-deception**)
  - c. **IMO**: the letter of James can be outlined along this line of thought – that saving faith is always **consistent** between what we believe and what we do
    1. previously, James argued that saving faith must be *tested* to be shown as genuine
    2. now, James is making his central point: **genuine saving faith permeates our very nature, starting in our regenerated heart, making its way out into every aspect of our lives**
      - a. starting with **vv. 19-20**: the command to be “*quick to hear*”= those who are genuine followers of Christ *prioritize* the “*word of truth*” that has set them apart unto God
      - b. (**now**) in **vv. 21-22**, James will attack one of **the most fundamental self-deceptions** that strongly tempts the believer, and bring his primary point to bear ...

## II. Be Doers of the Word (James 1:21-25)

### Content

#### a. the imperative to receive the implanted word (v. 21)

1. “*therefore*” = a conclusion that answers a fundamental question: be quick to hear *what* – *how* do we hear the “*word of truth*” – what does it *mean* to hear the “*word of truth*”?
  - a. **i.e.** to *prioritize* the “*word of truth*” and not to simply defend our own standards (**see below**)
2. the contrast of “*put away*” vs. “*receive*”
  - a. **i.e.** the imperative has two sides: a *negative one* (put away) and a *positive one* (receive)
  - b. on one side: put away = lay aside; put off; cast off; lit. stop
    1. all “*filthiness*” (*rhyparia*) = a word only used *here* (**i.e.** not used by the apostles; **see above**)
      - a. translated “*filth*” or “*filthiness*” in most English translations; probably assumed to mean filth by the KJV translators from the LXX or from other 1<sup>st</sup> C. sources and carried down in English

- b. the idea of dirt that *infiltrates* or *permeates* every aspect of something (**i.e.** as compared to just *dirty*; **e.g. Isa. 64:6 KJV**: the nature of our “*righteous deeds*” as filthy because they flow out of our sinful nature [and selfishness])  
*“But we are all as an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses [righteous deeds ESV] are as filthy rags ...”*
2. “*rampant*” (*perisseia*) wickedness = abundant; very great; superfluity
    - a. like “filthy” – something that pervades; all of the various forms of sinfulness or evil in us
    - b. **i.e.** the concupiscence of the flesh and all of its sinful desires (**vv. 13-15**)
  3. so, the imperative begins with the negative: put away all of your natural, fleshly desires; those sinful desires that *permeate* your fleshly nature
- c. on the other side: receive = accept; welcome; take hold of; lit. do something; start
1. the “*implanted*” (*emphyton*) = (again) only used *here* (**i.e.** not used by the apostles; **see above**)
    - a. translated “*implanted*”, “*engrafted*”, or “*planted in you*” in English translations
    - b. the idea of something *inherent* within the believer (**i.e.** the “*word of truth*” from **v. 18**) – the internal nature of God’s word within those “*brought forth*” by that word to faith
    - c. undoubtedly a reference to the converted nature of the believer – the new heart, with its inherent love of the law – the new nature of the believer whereby he or she desires to love God by being “*quick to hear*” his word *from within his or her own born-again heart*
  2. so, the imperative ends with the positive: embrace all of your *supernatural, Spirit-born* desires; those *holy* desires that permeate your *converted heart*
3. the imperative of “*put away*” vs. “*receive*”
- a. **question**: if James is so concerned about *consistency* in the believer, what is his point here – **i.e.** if *obedience* is so important to him within the framework of faith, what is the *standard of obedience* that he is assuming here?
  - b. **answer**: (**through a personal anecdote**) – my personal struggle with “making application” in my teaching within a *moral standard* (**e.g.** the exhortation by G. Preiss to “apply” my lectures; the moral example given in the Bible Book Series during the ‘90s)
    1. **i.e.** what’s the difference between teaching *morality* as the goal vs. teaching *holiness*?
    2. *teaching morality* = the application of an **external moral standard** to the lives of the student
      - a. **e.g.** the “separation” of fundamentalism not only from liberal theology, but “worldly” activities
      - b. an external standard of behavior that 1) appears to “satisfy” God, 2) is often “circumvented” (in loopholes), and 3) falls short of “complete” fulfillment (**e.g.** the moral code of Sinai; unable to be kept by the Israelites, although based on the nature of God)
      - c. this is a **fundamental self-deception** = to believe that God is “satisfied” by our “keeping” some external standard once we become a Christian, *and missing the bigger reality ...*
        1. **i.e.** the curse of law *reimposed* upon believers (**Gal. 3:3, 10**) – the “slavery” of law-keeping as the means of sanctification (**note quickly** “*law of liberty*” in **v. 25**)
    3. *teaching holiness* = the call to live in accordance with an **internal righteous state**
      - a. **i.e.** “*you shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy*” (**Lev. 19:2**) – not “be moral, for I am moral” – “*strive ... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord*” (**Heb. 12:14**)
      - b. **the call for sinners to face the desires of the flesh not by attempting to “check off a list,” but by recognizing (and claiming) that they are “not” (by nature) what they are being tempted to do contrary to their inherent nature**
      - c. **i.e.** to “*receive the implanted word*” = to *listen* to that internal word of God implanted within us by the Spirit which reminds us that we are *not* “that” anymore (**1 Cor. 6:11**)  
*“And such were some of you [immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, revilers, swindlers]. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*
      - d. **the pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of conforming our outward nature to our inward reality – to live holy lives rather than just moral lives**
  - c. James says (in his “cruder” way than the later apostles) that the true follower of Christ is to put away all forms of evil (in the flesh) by being “*quick to hear*” the voice of that inner nature inside of us (the implanted word) that we are *in the eyes of God* righteous and holy, and then to be that
    1. “*which is able to save your souls*” = not to satisfy the perfect demands of God *salvifically*, but sustaining us *steadfast* under trial (**v. 12**)
- b. the imperative to be doers of the implanted word (v. 22)**
1. “*not hearers only*” = receiving the truth of the word of God, but only *passively*
    - a. **i.e.** taking in the “knowledge” of what it means to be a Christian (mentally), but never making the *connection* between faith as a *saving* reality and faith as an **ontological** reality (experientially)
      1. “*deceiving yourself*” = missing the point the word of *truth is actually teaching ...*
      2. the **fundamental self-deception**: to think that being a Christian is just holding to a (variable) standard of outward behavior rather than living out our true nature in Christ

- b. **e.g.** the main form of teaching (**MTD**) that has dominated evangelical pulpits for the past 3 generations, leading to a general apostasy by millions who now renounce their upbringing
- 2. “*be doers of the word*” = live out that *ontological* nature of holiness that has been implanted in us by the Spirit of God when we heard the word of truth and were regenerated
  - a. **i.e.** to *be* what *claim* to be ...
  - b. **i.e.** not to be an **antinomian** (rejector of the law), for the law is written on our hearts (**Rom. 6:1**)
- 3. **the Christian life is the pursuit of holiness, the conformity of our entire existence to our nature as “a new creation in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17) – a freedom from the slavery of “checklists” (which constantly change!) to a life centered on the word of God which has the power to transform**
  - a. **question:** is this easy? – **answer:** no! we are trained early in life (as children) to adhere to moral standards as the “expedient” way to life
  - b. thus, to think *differently* about how to live takes much effort in the Scriptures learning about *who we really are*, and then bringing that *ontological reality* to bear against the desires of the flesh
  - c. **thus, I am more inclined to preach about who you are, rather than what you are to do**