

Be Doers of the Word: Why and How?

[James 1:21-25](#)

James, Day 9

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 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. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 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 1:21-25, ESV

"If it was easy, everybody would do it." I don't know where I first heard that expression, but it has stuck in my mind over the years as a motivation. It's simple and has limited effectiveness, and tends to promote a level of self-righteousness and arrogance when it is effective. I can feel really good about myself and look down on others who do less because I did something that "if it was easy, everybody would do it."

Is that the kind of thinking behind James 1:21-25 and God's admonition to us to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only"? Is God just saying to us: "Look, I know it's not easy, but it's time to buck up and 'git 'er done'!"? No, it's not that simple.

First of all, God is challenging us to see sin for what it is, and not to be fooled by the deceptions of our enemy. What is sin? One of the tricks of our enemy is to minimize and justify sin: "Well, it's just a little . . ." And God calls us to identify sin for what it is: filthiness and rampant wickedness. All sin is defiling and evil; it's not some little, light thing.

Sin is deceiving, and when we give in to the voice of sin in our lives, we are deceiving ourselves. We are living a lie. So, James calls us to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." This is where we must begin: It's not a simple matter of trying harder. We first have to begin by rejecting deception, including self-deception, and humbly receiving the truth of God to our souls.

But receiving the word with meekness bears fruit far beyond mere head-knowledge. When we have received the word with meekness, our hearts are transformed from the inside out. We then recognize God's moral law for what it is: "the perfect law, the law of liberty."

What does the world and our sinful flesh tell us all the time? "Sin is freedom, and God's law is restriction and limitation keeping us from that freedom." But that's a lie, isn't it? Of course it is. Sin is the real bondage, and God's perfect law is the real way to a life of liberty!

How do we learn this truth deep down inside? Only by walking in the law of liberty, by living according to the word, by being doers of the word and not hearers only. So, hearers of the word are those who give superficial assent to the word of God, but who don't really believe deep down that God's word is truly the path of life.

Once we receive the implanted word with meekness, really trusting God, we will know from the depth of our souls that this is the word of eternal life, this is the law of liberty, and we will desire to walk in it. And as we walk in it, we will experience the blessed freedom of living according to the word, and we will be even more encouraged and strengthened to walk in the light of His truth.

"If it was easy, everybody would do it." Turns out, that's not really true, because our problem is fundamentally not that God's word is hard, but that we don't really believe it is good and freeing. So, it's not a lack of effort but a heart-blindness to the truth that is our biggest obstacle. So, more than big spiritual muscles, we need clear spiritual sight and humble hearts to see and know and receive the truth, that we may walk in it.