Be Doers of the Word & Not Hearers Only

James 1:22-27

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

To go on gaining an intellectual knowledge of the Bible without obeying it can be a trap instead of a blessing.

If we continually learn what we ought to do, but do not do it, we become frustrated and callous.

"Impression without expression leads to depression."

The bottom line is that the Word evokes action, and if there is no action from the Word, then clearly there has been no acceptance of the Word.

Those who have accepted Jesus obey Jesus.

We also become more responsible to God. The more we know His Word, the more accountable we are.

To say, “I have accepted Jesus,” but then to live contrary to Jesus is to live deceived.
1 John 2:4-5
4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,  
5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

James says you are blind to your true spiritual condition if you claim to have heard and received and accepted this word, yet you fail to act on it.

James’s words sound eerily familiar to Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:21-27
21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.  
22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’  
23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’  
24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine
and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

If your spiritual life is built on just **listening** to the words of Jesus and not on **obeying** the words of Jesus, then something is not right.

Don't say, "Pastor, I am willing to be obedient to the Word of God," then fail to follow through.

If you listen and you don’t do anything, you’ve not really listened. And if you’re willing, but you don’t do anything, you’re not really willing.

Don’t be willing to obey the Word; obey the Word. Don’t be willing to help the poor; help the poor.
Don’t be willing to share the gospel; share the gospel. Don’t be willing to live in purity; live in purity.

As the trademark slogan of Nike says: Just Do It........

This deception is real. This word "deceiving" in verse 22 was used in mathematics to refer to a miscalculation.

Professing Christians who are content with only hearing the Word have made a serious spiritual miscalculation.

Repentance and a change of behavior are in order.

23 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.
24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

First-century mirrors were not glass but metallic, made of bronze, silver—or for the wealthy—gold.

The metals were beaten flat and polished to a high gloss, and the image they reflected was adequate, but not perfect.
1 Corinthians 13:12
12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Yet, when the mirror says "Wash" or "Shave" or "Comb" or "Brush," we should at least do as we are told. Otherwise, the mirror is of no practical benefit to us.

It is easy to read the Bible casually or because of a sense of duty without being affected by what we read.

Some treat the Bible just like they treat the mirror. They learn nothing from it.

25 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.

If you were here last week, we learned the Law of Moses was given to reveal sin. The Law of Moses cannot justify or save.
Romans 3:20
20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

James calls the OT and NT, God’s revealed, inerrant, sufficient, and comprehensive Word, the "perfect law, the law of liberty."

Jesus Christ, the "perfect law, the law of liberty," frees us from our sin bondage and enables us to obey the Word of God.

The precepts of "the law of liberty" are not burdensome. These new precepts tell him to do exactly what his new nature loves to do.

John 8:36
36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.
Religious means the external patterns of behavior connected with religious belief. It refers to the outward forms rather than the inward spirit.

James chose this "religious" term, to emphasize the external trappings, rituals, routines, and forms that were not followed sincerely.

Bridle means “control,” or “keep a tight rein.” Purity of heart is often revealed by controlled and appropriate speech.

**Matthew 12:34**
34 .......For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

**Matthew 12:36-37**
36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Anyone who thinks he is religious, but cannot control his tongue ...What he or she believes is useless.
He might observe all kinds of religious ceremonies which make him appear very devout.

But he is deceiving himself. God is not satisfied with rituals; He is interested in a life of practical godliness.

An unbridled tongue is only one example of fruitless religion.

Bottom line, "Does your walk match your talk?"

In a day of text-messaging, e-mail, cell phones, Twitter, blogs, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, etc., we need to be careful. We’ve created an entire culture that says if you have a thought, then you should immediately share it with the rest of the world. But follower of Christ, keep a tight rein on your tongue, and speak in a way that shows your faith is real and the core of your heart belongs to God.

What kind of "Religion" pleases God?

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
When James wrote this letter, there was no life insurance a husband or father would leave to a widow or his children. Nor were there government-run programs to provide for them. As the Old Testament story of Ruth shows us, widows and orphans were desolate and destitute.

James is telling us that true religion consists in looking after the neediest people in your community.

Those without parents or husbands were and are important to God.

1 Timothy 5:3
3 Honor widows who are truly widows.

Exodus 22:22-23
22 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. 23 If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry,

Psalm 68:4-5
4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him!
5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.

Martin Luther said, “A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.”

And finally, "keep oneself unstained from the world."

I believe there is a theological link between the end of verse 27 and chapter 2 verse 1 as it relates to favoritism. I believe James observed an issue the Holy Spirit deemed important enough to address.

James was referring to "holiness and purity," as it relates to going against the grain or not buying into a system that is always about compromise.

I believe I can best explain this by John's writing in 1 John 2:

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and
the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.