

James Part 4

Hearers / Doers

James 1:19-27

Memory Verses: James 1:22

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Before Easter we had spent three weeks in the first chapter of James. In week one of this series, in **verse 1**, we saw how James, the half brother of Christ, considered himself a lowly servant of Christ. James had come to recognize that Jesus, who he at one time viewed simply as a bratty brother, was in fact the unfathomably big God of the universe. We, like James, must also recognize that we are insignificantly small in comparison to such a Big God... and yet our God loves us, reveals himself to us, and woos us onto His path which is defined by having the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

In week two we looked to **verses 2 through 12** where we tackled the ever present and necessary topic of trials.... and we came away with this amazing truth; “every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish.” Trials mature us in our walk with Christ,, trials make us depend more on Christ, trials strengthen our faith as we confront doubts, and trials strengthen our personal relationships as we overcome resentment. Trials can make us better people and better Christians if we allow them to.

And then in week three we looked at **verses 13 through 18** and saw that yes, we will face trials in this life, but an even greater adversary than our trials is our temptations. **1 Corinthians 10:13** gives us this assurance, that there is no temptation we can't escape through the power of Christ. How do we escape our temptations? Simple. We recognize the essence of temptation; which is to destroy us, and we rely on the truth of goodness of God; which replaces and eventually alleviates our susceptibility to fleshly temptations. In short; the more we fill ourselves up with Jesus, the less room we have for sin in our lives.

And all of this is permeated by two main themes; faith and works. We rely on Christ in faith to triumph over our trials and to overcome temptation, while at the same time we work out our faith, proving through our deeds that we aren't defeated or dismayed but resolute and joyfully obedient. If we believe all of this... and allow it to transform our lives then there can be little doubt that... faith works.

And so today we continue where we left off in chapter 1 and we will finish the rest of the chapter today going from **verse 19 through 27**. Would you please read with me.

What in this passage does God want us to believe by faith and

live out by works today? I believe it is this; **If we refuse to hear... we can't be changed. If we refuse to do... we haven't changed. If we refuse to go... they won't be changed.**

There is a huge difference between hearing and doing. For a believer hearing is necessary. **Romans 10:14** makes it clear that in order to believe one must first hear. **Verse 22** makes it clear that we are also called to do... but in that we are still called to hear. Some people may read this and see... “be does of the word, and not hearers.” But, they miss that it actually says “not hearers only.” That “only” makes it clear that it's necessary to still hear. Be hearers and then be doers. Hearing without doing is nothing.

But, I would dare say doing without hearing isn't much better. **Hearing without doing leads to hypocrisy. Doing without hearing leads to heresy.** And, ultimately it's deception. When we hear we tend to believe that we are becoming more spiritual. The more we hear, the more spiritual we are. This is common in our American churches where the pews are filled with hearers who feel that they have a true religion. But unfortunately they've deceived themselves... because the mark of true spirituality is not hearing... but doing. They aren't spiritually mature because, for the most part, what they've heard has never been put into practice.

Likewise, there are many in this world who are out there serving the needy, saving the planet, fighting for better wages, and fighting against racism. They are doers. But they aren't hearers. The Word is not their guide and so every one of their endeavors is misguided. They think they are making a difference but they are also... deceived.

The only true way to make sure that what we hear and what we do really counts is to make sure that we are both hearing and doing. That's why our point this morning is... **If we refuse to hear... we can't be changed. If we refuse to do... we haven't changed. If we refuse to go... they won't be changed.** Let's look at this statement and this passage a little deeper and put our faith to work this morning.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want you to see here is that... **If We Refuse To Hear We Can't Be Changed.** Look again at **vs. 19-21**. It's clear that we are called to hear the word. But, what exactly does this mean? Well, it doesn't mean to simply read the Bible. It doesn't mean to put the audio Bible on and just let it play while you are playing Fortnite. It doesn't mean to come to church once in a while and hear a preacher's sermon. You see, as Wesley Snipes makes it clear to Woody Harrelson in “White Men Can't Jump,” there's a difference between listening to something and hearing something. Just cause you listen to Jimi Hendrix doesn't mean you can hear Jimi Hendrix. And hearing the Word takes more than just listening to it or reading it. Hearing it means to let it penetrate your soul. Look at **vs.21**. Let the

Word be implanted into your soul. It must not be something we casually listen to, but something that we take to heart and challenge the way we think. Hearing the word means meditation, hearing the word means memorization, hearing the word takes dedication and hearing the Word takes consistency.

Look at **vs.19**, be swift to hear, and slow to speak. Once again, many have come to believe that this passage is referring to being a good listener in a conversation between two people... but the context here is something else – let's be clear... it's about hearing the Word of God. **Romans 10:17** says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. The only way to truly hear... is to hear the Word of God... and in order to hear the word of God it must be our first response. Quick to listen means that when it comes to any situation or any circumstance our first response is... what does the Bible say about this? Many times we want to be quick to speak first without consulting the word. We have our own opinion about the subject.. but if we are quick to speak and slow to listen then often our opinions may not lineup with the Word... and thats a big problem. **Quick to speak and slow to listen is the posture of someone who approaches the Word expecting to hear what they want it to say, rather than hearing what God is really saying.** Therefore we are called to be quick to listen to the word and slow to speak our opinion.

Verses 19-20 Give us a practical illustration. When we are patient enough to listen first to God's word without speaking we can avoid unrighteous anger. Fleshly anger arises when we decide to confront others with our own opinions. We will find many places to disagree with people... but if we were to listen to the Word of God first we would know that quick tempers and quick judgements are the opposite of his grace and love. When we go to God's Word first we can find peace with one another, but when we refuse to listen to the Word first and take it upon ourselves to speak in God's place... we can wreck our relationships and ourselves at the same time. Stop speaking your words... and start hearing and speaking God's words.

Verse 21 makes it clear. When we humbly receive the Word of God in our lives and allow it to be implanted deep within our minds and hearts it will change who we are on a fundamental level. Anger and arrogance are the first to go, but soon to follow will be all manner of filthy sin and selfish wickedness. They are put away. It just goes to show as we saw last week... when we fill ourselves with more of Jesus, more of the word... it leaves less room for temptation and sin.

The Word has the power to change us... but more importantly the Word has the power to save us. **John 1:1** makes it clear that Jesus is the Word. When we hear the Word, we learn of Jesus the Messiah who takes away our sins. Eventually, through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit we hopefully come to put our faith in him, trusting in him

to save us. Hear the Word... hear Jesus... and be saved. If you truly hear the Word it can save you.. **If we refuse to hear... we can't be changed.**

The second thing we see here is... **If We Refuse To Do We Haven't Changed.** If we hear the Word we can be changed... but if we don't do the Word... we haven't been changed. Look at **vs22-25**. The American church has a huge problem.. they love to "hear" and they love to talk. We have countless committee meetings, Sunday school classes, Sunday worship services, songs sung, sermons preached, and bible studies galore... and all of those are good and necessary, as we just made clear in the last point. But, what does all that talking and hearing produce? Is our doing in proportion to our hearing? For most of us the answer is No. Not by a long shot... it's not even close. For example... If I were to ask you how many sermons, lessons, songs, and times of bible study have you had... you'd most likely have a number in the thousands if not tens of thousands. But if on the other hand I asked, how many times have you personally given food, or money, or clothing to the poor... my guess is you might actually be able to count those times on one hand. This isn't a guilt trip... this is an examination. I'm just as guilty as the next guy. We must hear... but by God we must also do! Why? Cause doing proves our hearing. Our works prove our faith. You get it now don't you?

Look at **verses.23-24**. What we've heard doesn't stick unless we put it into practice. **We can hear, and we can know, but until our faith becomes action none of it will be locked in.** It won't be solidified... it won't be complete. For example... my wife took four years of Spanish in high school and some in college. She should be able to speak fluent Spanish by now... but what happened... after college she didn't know anyone who spoke Spanish, she never got a chance to practice it... and now she'll tell you she can hardly speak it all... why... cause if you hear, and know but don't put it into practice... it doesn't get locked in. Christian, if you hear the word but never put it into practice you can begin to believe that you are growing in your spiritual maturity... but in reality you aren't... your spinning your wheels, and you are merely deceiving yourself. The fact is that without practice you aren't changed and you aren't being transformed. And if this is the case... if your actions are what truly lock in your transformation.... are you really a follower of Christ if you have done very little in the way of obedience, service, and doing? Forget what you've heard... what have you done?

Verses 25 Makes clear that the true process of transformation is this... One looks into the perfect Word of God, finds the perfect savior of the world, trusts in him as Lord and obeys what he says in the pages of his Word... He perseveres through obedience... he acts in obedience... and he is blessed with spiritual maturity and a transformed life. The doing culminates the blessing. It's simple... **If we refuse to do... we haven't changed.**

The third thing we need to see today is this... **If We Refuse To Go They Won't Be Changed**. First we receive the Word. And, secondly we practice the Word. But, there is still one more step to being a complete follower of Christ. We must share the Word. Look at **verses 26-27**. Did you know that there is such a thing as a worthless religion? Someone who has read the word, thinks they are religious because they have heard and know the Bible... but the Bible has not changed their heart. Their actions do not reflect what they say they know... because they have refused to obey the Word. Two illustrations are right here in the text. The word says let your speech be seasoned with salt; do not lie, slander, gossip, or curse others with your words. The religious may know this... but it doesn't translate to actions. They can't bridle their tongue. Their religion is worthless. The word also says to take care of the poor the widows, the orphans, the less fortunate... be a good samaritan. The religious know this but still are not motivated to do anything about it. Therefore their religion is dead.

On the other end... a real religion doesn't just hear... a real religion does... and real religion goes. It's not enough to hear and not do... and it's not enough to do and not go and share the Gospel. All three are necessary. Therefore, we go and serve the poor and the needy and then we share the good Word with them. **In contrast to those who can't help but destroy with their words... those who have been transformed can't help but share the good news**. A true disciple doesn't just care about his life transformation, but the transformation of others also... **If we refuse to go... they won't be changed**.

Application

So where are you today? Are you a hearer but not a doer? Are you a doer but not a hearer? Or are you a hearer, and a doer, but struggle with going and sharing? A true follower of Christ understands that what they've learned needs to become real in the way they live their lives. For far too long we've had people claim to be Christians because they have a fleeting feeling in their gut that Jesus may be a real person... that is hardly enough to save someone from themselves... much less hell. Being a transformed follower of Jesus means putting into action what you've heard. I means having a faith that works. Be a hearer. Be a doer. Be a goer. But don't ever be just a hearer... or just a doer... or just a goer.

So are you merely a hearer? You know the Word but have very little motivation to live it out practically in the world. I would guess that most of us who are struggling with this passage today are struggling with this first one. You can easily choose today to commit yourself to the next step of not being merely a hearer but a doer as well.

Or perhaps you are the second one.. you are a doer but not a hearer. You want to help people, help the planet, help make things better... but you haven't ever used the Bible as your guide. You are not a Christian... because the Word is not your foundation. I doubt we have many of you in here this morning but if that is the case... today is the day of salvation. I or any number of people in this room can lead you to Christ... the true Word.

Or perhaps you are the third one you are a hearer, and you are a doer... but you struggle with the going and sharing. I wouldn't doubt it if many of us were there this morning. It's time to commit to taking that next step and taking the good news to those you are serving. **If we refuse to hear... we can't be changed. If we refuse to do... we haven't changed. If we refuse to go... they won't be changed.**

Conclusion

As we close I want to tell you about Harrison Schmitt. Harrison Schmitt was the last man to ever walk on the moon in 1972. He was scheduled to go to the moon on Apollo 18 but Apollo 18 was cancelled along with the entire Apollo program. Schmitt had a strong belief that as a geologist, everything he had learned and believed about the moon was nothing if he couldn't see it for himself. Knowing about the moon and going to the moon were not the same thing. So he commissioned NASA to let him go on Apollo 17, the last ever ride to the lunar surface. Schmitt made sure he put his faith into action. As he got older and started reflecting on his achievements he said this... "time is, in fact, a cross to bear. It passes on inexorably and remorselessly, destroying everything in its wake.. save art and works of the intellect." Did you get that... the only thing that will last beyond time is "works of the intellect." Not intellect itself... but works of the intellect. What Schmitt felt about the moon before going would not last... but the fact that he was the last man on the moon will last forever.

The same goes for us. What we've learned and what we believe will be destroyed by time... it will mean nothing in the long term... unless we put it into action. It's time for you to stop just hearing and learning... it's time for you to go grab that last ride to the moon. So go and be doers of the word, and not hearers only!