

Series – Part 7: How to Live as a Christian:

Be a Doer of the Word!

James 1:22-27 ESV

3rd Sunday After Pentecost / 2nd After Trinity – 2013

Sunday, June 9 at 8:00 & 10:45; Monday, June 10 at 7 PM

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, Lutherans tend to be familiar with Ephesians 2:8 and 2:9 but not 2:10. What am I talking about?

- 2:8 and 2:9 tell us that we have been saved by grace through faith; *God has done it*; it is His gift to us!
- Then 2:10 follows with the rest of the story; God has saved us *to be doers of His Word!*

In today's text God is speaking through James → to show us what is normal for believers and → to open the eyes of those who are deceiving themselves.

1. **Are You Becoming a Doer of the Word?** Earlier, in *James chapter 1*, we learned that God gave us spiritual birth through the **Word of Truth**; then, *at the end of last week's text*, we were told to ²¹ "...receive with meekness the **implanted word**, which is able to save **[our] souls.**" Thus, by GOD'S WORK, we are saved! Now James tells us *what to do* with that implanted word: ²² ~~But be~~ [‡] **[And become] doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** // We are being called to LIVE what we PROFESS! Some **hear and**

¹ The ESV text has been changed in various places to either correct the translation or change the tense to match the Greek text.

do; others **hear but take no action**, *such people are misleading or fooling themselves*. The Bible says: "...not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified." (Rom 2:13 NAS) The doing does NOT save, *but it is the outward expression of our faith!* But "for 'faith' to be real, it must be translated into 'works.'"² Luther: "faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good."³

- a. **Hearing without doing:** ²³ **For** [*indicating this to be the explanation of v. 22*] **if anyone** [*today's key word*] **is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently [looking] at his natural face in a mirror.** ²⁴ **For he looks [looked] at himself and goes [has gone] away and immediately forgets [forgot] what he was like.**
 - i. **Too busy:** "Everything in that description stresses haste and casualness."⁴ *Let us NOT receive God's Word in those ways!*
 - ii. **Actual Mirror:** We look and see the need to comb our hair, *but we quickly go away and forget to comb it.*
 - iii. **Spiritual Mirror:** We hear the Word of God, *but we quickly go away and forget to do it.* James is calling all such people to ♦be sorry, ♦receive God's forgiveness in Christ, and ♦become doers of the Word!

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (Yale University as assignee from Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc., 1995), 213.

³ *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (T. G. Tappert, Ed.) (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 552-553.

⁴ Johnson, 208.

b. Hearing and doing: ²⁵ **But the one ~~who looks~~ [having looked] into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and ~~perseveres~~ [remaining / continuing / abiding], ~~being no hearer who forgets~~ [not being a forgetful hearer] but a doer ~~who acts~~ [of work], he will be blessed in his doing. //**

- i. The perfect law of liberty: That is God's perfect Word about ♦our sin, ♦His saving work, and ♦His will for all believers.
- ii. Remaining / continuing / abiding: Jesus said: "If you abide in My word, *then you are truly disciples of Mine...*" (John 8:31 NAS) Those who abide in God's Word are not forgetful hearers, *but doers!*
- iii. Encouragement for doers: *They will be blessed!* "The blessed one is not he who knows these things but the one who does them..."⁵ Jesus said: "Blessed...are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28 ESV)

2. **Does Your Life Show Your Connection to Christ?** In this section James gives two examples, one regarding what we **say** and another regarding what we **do**:

- a. False religion: ²⁶ **If anyone thinks** [*"frequently used in the NT for false opinion"*⁶] **he is religious, and does not ~~bride~~ [bridling / controlling] his tongue but ~~deceives~~ [deceiving] his heart, ~~this person's~~ [his] religion is worthless. //** To some it may seem

right to put others down, get angry, and use profanity, *but such people are deceived!* Jesus said: "...his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." (Luke 6:45 NAS) Also, "A professed Christianity that centers on the external expressions of faith—attendance at worship, rote prayers, church membership, participation in [the Supper]—but is devoid of the regenerating power of the gospel—is [as] futile and unprofitable as idol worship."⁷

- b. True religion: ²⁷ **Religion that is pure and undefiled before [the] God, ~~the~~ [and] Father, is this: to ~~visit~~ [look after] orphans and widows in their affliction / difficult circumstances, and to keep himself unstained from the world. //** So pure religion, *thus living as believers in Christ*, is to keep ♦helping those who cannot repay us (Luke 14:12-14) and ♦saying "no" to our sinful desires.

Conclusion: Let's remember and apply God's Word:

1. God has saved us *to be* _____ *of His Word!*
2. We are being called to _____ what we PROFESS!

May the joy of God's salvation move us to faithfully learn the Word and gladly do it!

And all God's people said: **Amen!**

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⁵ Johnson, 210.

⁶ Ibid., 210.

⁷ D. Edmond Heibert, *James* (Winona Lake, Indiana: BHM Books, 1979 [Revised Edition, 1992]), p. 125.