

Think of everything you hear during a normal day. Familiar songs on the radio. What's happening in the world on the morning news. Expectations from superiors at work. A person discussing their life too loud on a cellphone next to you at lunch. Homework assignments from the teachers. Entertaining TV shows until it's time for bed. Out of everything you hear, some might be good some bad; some true some false; some worth listening to, some not so much. Probably tune out half of what you hear because you figure it's not important.

Is the Word of God you hear this morning just more of what you hear throughout your day? If you're hearing God speak, but it's going in one ear and out the other something is wrong. Just hearing the Word isn't enough to be saved. That's right, hearing the Word of God is not enough to be saved. You know a lot of people who hear it but aren't saved. You at one time may have been someone who heard it but wasn't saved. There's more to it than just hearing it.

James was probably the half brother of Jesus. That meant he heard Jesus speak a lot. The entire letter that James wrote guides others to recognize that only hearing God's Word isn't enough. Hearing alone leaves us in our sinfulness and leaves us without hope of eternal life. Don't go anywhere else, but do...

Turn back to the Word
Hear and believe
Believe and do

A firestorm this last week in Washington DC surrounded one of South Carolina's representatives. If you didn't see it, during a speech on Wednesday President Obama was saying something and suddenly a congressman shouted out a comment. All eyes turned his direction, not sure what to make of the comment. You see the House of Representatives has unwritten rules on decorum, and speaking out while the President is talking is one of those unwritten rules. It's considered bad form to speak while someone else is speaking.

Seems like common sense, but we know that it's not natural to anyone. That's why inspired by God James recorded it in the Bible for us. **"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak."** Whether it be the US House of Representatives, the school classroom, or our homes this makes sense as a rule. But with God it makes even more sense. If God is talking and your talking then you're not hearing what God is saying. And we don't need even one guess to know which is more important to hear, ourselves or God.

Generally we practice a lot of hearing on Sunday mornings. We hear the words of Jesus so we don't miss something important. But what about hearing outside worship? How about when God speaks and society speaks, which do we hear then? Society says sharing juicy gossip is a victimless crime, God disagrees. Living with a boyfriend or girlfriend before marriage society calls financial sense, God calls it sinful. Taking a Sunday for you society calls it relaxation and necessary, God calls it missing out on hearing something important.

Have we become too comfortable with sin? Do we hear society speak and not even grow concerned? Their temptations don't trigger alarm bells but rather sound appealing. But it's not just society. Even from within our hearts produce enough temptation to keep us from hearing clearly the Word of God. We're sinners by nature, so our natural position is to avoid hearing God's Word.

Prepare yourself this morning to hear God's Word. Turn back to it. Clear away things that might cause you to not hear God speaking. Set your thoughts about the weekly schedule aside for now. Don't ponder the homework you have to do right now. The problems of this week will still be there so don't worry about them right now. Right now hearing is what's important. By hearing the Word is being implanted in you. **"Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."** That is, don't reject it. Humbly acknowledge you didn't have anything to do with its arrival in your heart. You simply hear it. Now believe it.

Believe what exactly? Believe that the Word implanted in you regarding Jesus. **"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth."** Without you saying a word, God selected you in his grace to hear the words and promises about Jesus and believe them. By faith he works a spiritual rebirth. Those times you talked out of turn, when you ignored God's Word in favor of hearing societies temptations, all those sins are forgiven in Jesus. Sin, guilt, and a place in hell are gone. What replace them are words you can hear and believe. Words about the resurrection, words about eternal life, words that work faith in your hearts to hear and believe Jesus and his promises. Hear the Word, believe it, it's true.

End of school on Friday and the 3rd graders were supposed to be getting their school bags. Four of them were staring at something one of them brought to school, completely unaware Miss Wehrenberg was staring with an unhappy look on her face. They were in trouble because even though they heard her say go get your school bags, they didn't follow through and do. Hearing what the Bible says doesn't mean much if you aren't doing what the Bible says. God expects doers of his Word not just hearers of his Word. Don't just hear and believe. Believe and do.

Those with blue eyes raise your hands? From here I can't tell if all the blue eyed people raised their hands, but I certainly hope none of you forgot. You got ready in front of a mirror this morning, you've looked in mirrors before; you would've noticed if you had blue eyes. But looking in a mirror is only good if you remember details and features when you're not in front of a mirror. James says the same about those hearing the Bible, **"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."** To walk away from God's Word and not do what God's Word says is like forgetting what you look like in the mirror. Seems foolish.

So James encourages us to be doers of the Word. Hearing and believing it on Sunday morning is great. But if the second you go out those doors you forget everything you've heard, that's foolish. **"If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."** If the Bible says care for widows and the poor and you leave thinking only of how you can make your money stretch to get the new car and the vacation, that's not doing the Word. If the Bible says don't drink in excess and this afternoon, or later this week, or whenever you drink till you can't see straight that's not doing the Word. Hearing and believing in Jesus is good, but leave this building and do his word. Live your faith, show you're a Christian, demonstrate God's love for you to others.

We call it the law of gravity. But nowhere in our government's laws is it written that what goes up must come down. It's a natural principle that holds true when observed. **"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does."** James is not saying doing the 10 commandments saves us. He is saying we can observe a principle so perfect it gives freedom; the gospel principle. In this principle we hear about Jesus who lived under our laws but kept every one perfectly. But what gains us liberty is that in love for us Jesus credited his perfection to us. That's the perfect law that grants freedom. Freedom from sin and its consequences. Freedom to praise God and worship him. Freedom to obey his commands and please him in what we do. Believe that Word and do it.

Lots of people claim to be religious, doing things that appear very religious. Every Sunday in church, hearing God's Word faithfully. But hearing God's Word is only a start. The Holy Spirit implants in your heart today through hearing, the Word so you believe it. And he doesn't stop there. God's Word works in our hearts motivation and direction to be doers of the Word. Doing God's Word means showing acts of love to our neighbor. Doing God's Word means showing acts of faith to the world. When you're hearing so much you can't really hear anything, turn to God's Word. Turn to hear it and believe it. Then go and do it in Jesus name.