



## Selah...From Hearing to Doing: Encouragement in Bridging the Gap!

November 26, 2023

### **Holy Text: James 1:21-25**

For a few years, we've noticed an interesting spiritual phenomena. We mentioned it last week. There often seems to be a disconnect between **orthodoxy and orthopraxy, apprehending and application, understanding and unction, hearing and doing, preaching and practice, and listening and living! It's the LOB: The Life-Obedience Gap!**

By this, we aren't necessarily referring to the outright rebellion that afflicts the unregenerate hearer: an intention to purposely, willfully, and stiff-neckedly disobey because they are enemies of God. This is the characteristic of the unredeemed...the children of the devil who have not been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**Rather, today, we desire to encourage those who desire to be faithful, but are mired in the common failures of the flesh, lapses in faith, and worldview misunderstandings which can confuse and delay God's blessing! Indeed:**

***Colossians 2:6-8 (KJV)** As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: **7** Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. **8** Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

### **Motivation for Today**

#### **God loves You!**

***Deuteronomy 7:6-8 (KJV)** For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. **7** The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: **8** But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

***Ephesians 2:4-7 (KJV)** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) **6** And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: **7** That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

***1 John 4:10 (KJV)** Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

#### **God's Word for You is Good!**

***Deuteronomy 6:24 (KJV)** And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.*

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13 (KJV)** *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, 13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?*

**James 1:25 (KJV)** *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

**Proverbs 3:17 (KJV)** *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

### **Exposition**

1. The Epistle of James, likely written between 40-50 AD (very early), was written by “James the Just,” the half-brother of our LORD.
  - This was the same James who became the leader of the Jerusalem church. (Acts 12:16-17, 15:12-13, 21:17-18).
  - In his Ecclesiastical History Vol II, Eusebius writes, “Then James, whom the ancients surnamed the Just on account of the excellence of his virtue, is recorded to have been the first to be made bishop of the church of Jerusalem. This James was called the brother of the Lord because he was known as a son of Joseph, and Joseph was supposed to be the father of Christ, because the Virgin, being betrothed to him, was found with child by the Holy Ghost before they came together, as the account of the holy Gospels shows.”
2. Like the writer of Hebrews, James is writing primarily to distressed Jews, in his case, those who had been dispersed (Jam 1:1), “possibly as a result of Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7, c. A.D. 31-34), but more likely due to the persecution under Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12, c. A.D. 44).”<sup>1</sup>
3. “James, with its devotion to direct, pungent statements on wise living, is reminiscent of the Book of Proverbs. It has a practical emphasis, not emphasizing theoretical knowledge, but godly behavior. James wrote with a passionate desire for his readers to be uncompromisingly obedient to the Word of God.”<sup>2</sup>
4. And like the writer of Hebrews, James gets right to the point, encouraging his hearers to remain faithful regardless of their difficult days...
  - Counting it all joy when they deal with temptations (v.2)
  - Encouraging patience, wisdom, and faith (vv. 2-6)
  - Discouraging doubt and double-mindedness (vv.6-8)
  - Teaching a godly view of wealth (vv.9-11)
  - Describing the road to sin and exhorting against the lusts of the flesh (vv.12-15)
  - Encouraging truth, swiftness of hearing and slowness speaking and wrath (vv. 16-20)
5. And then, in our opinion, James gives some of the best instruction in the New Testament concerning the foundational strategy of living the Christian Life:
  - Committing to rid our lives of the abundance of defiled things! (v.21)
  - Receiving the Word with meekness (the only true way to receive it)! (v.21)

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur Study Bible

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

- Although such meekness is the key to obedience, actually stepping out and doing is hard! Going from **amen to action** (becoming a doer) requires much strength! (v.22)
- James gives us some motivation though: hearing and not doing involves self-deception. (v.23) The word “deceiving” is translated “beguile” in Col 2:4: “And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.”
- Remember, the devil is the “father of lies” (John 8:44) and “deceives the whole world” (Rev 12:9). Deception is his purview!
- **Therefore, there is a larger principal here as a relates to obedience versus disobedience: there is always an open door to spiritual (not just self) deception when God's Word is not followed.**
- Ex: one would truly have to be spiritually deceived to promote the sins on this list:  
**1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (KJV)** *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, **10** Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*
- These are frightening verses with frightening implications:  
**1 Samuel 15:22-23 (KJV)** *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. **23** For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*
- James 1:23-24 describe the sad situation using a mirror metaphor. William MacDonald writes here:  
*Anyone who hears the word but does not change his behavior is like a man who takes a fleeting glance in the mirror each morning, then completely forgets what he saw. He derives no benefit from the mirror or from looking into it. Of course, there are some things about our appearance that cannot be changed. But at least we should be humbled by the sight! And 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. We see what we ought to be but we quickly forget and live as if we were already perfect. This type of self-satisfaction prevents spiritual progress.<sup>3</sup>*
- Let us fight our tendency to be a “forgetful hearer!” Remember, God’s Word is “**The Law of Liberty!**” **Liberty suggests liberation (not limitation) and freedom! Continuing in it brings “blessing!”** (v.25) Again from MacDonald:

*In contrast is the man who looks into the word of God and who habitually reduces it to practice. His contemplative, meditative gazing has practical results in his life. To him the Bible is the perfect law of liberty. Its precepts are not burdensome. They tell him to do exactly what his new nature loves to do. As he obeys, he finds true freedom from human traditions and carnal reasonings. The truth makes him free. This is the man who benefits*

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<sup>3</sup> Bible Believer’s Commentary

from the Bible. He does not forget what he has read. Rather he seeks to live it out in daily practice. His simple childlike obedience brings incalculable blessing to his soul. This one will be blessed in what he does.

### **Explanation (of why “doing” can be so hard)**

Although James’ instruction is simple to understand, *doing can be very difficult to do*, even for those with an earnest desire to be faithful. Why?

#### **1. You. You have to deal with your own inner battles.**

- Your lusts. The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against flesh. (Gal 5:17)
- Your insecurities, fears, and trust in God and His Word.

*Did you know that one of (if not the most) often repeated command in the Bible is some version of “fear not?” “Fear not,” “be not afraid,” fear ye not,” “fear thou not,” “be strong,” “be of a good courage,” and similar phrases are found nearly over 150 times throughout Scripture! Adding verses that exhort faith and trust, that number greatly rises!<sup>4</sup>*

- Your status. Losing all to gain Christ (Php 3:7) is good preaching but a tough life!
- Your finances. Obedience often has a cost!

**Luke 14:27-28 (KJV)** *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

- Your rejection of or lack of knowledge.

**Hosea 4:6 (KJV)** *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

#### **2. Expectations of Others, especially those close to you.**

- Conflicts with a spouse. Sometimes, your spouse doesn’t encourage your obedience. (Job and his wife, Job 2:9-10; David and Michal, 2 Sam 6, etc.)
- Issues with parents/children. Parents who discourage their children’s righteousness or rebellious children who influence their parents towards sin is very common in culture.
- Pressure from friends (Job’s three friends) and extended family battles. Many don’t want to face Uncle/Aunt so-and-so at the family reunion due to their biblical decisions!

#### **3. Devils. You are fighting a spiritual war.**

**Mark 4:15 (KJV)** *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

**Ephesians 2:2 (KJV)** *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/2022/5/be-strong-and-of-a-good-courage>

**Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

#### 4. The world. Cultural/social pressure is real.

- This world system coordinates against Christ. The temptation to care too much about what the world thinks is VERY real!

**Mark 4:19 (KJV)** And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

**2 Timothy 4:10 (KJV)** For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

- Let us have the right perspective about the world!

**John 15:19 (KJV)** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

**1 John 2:15-17 (KJV)** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. **17** And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

#### **Application**

1. Commit to doing, actually applying what Scripture teaches.

**Luke 6:46 (KJV)** And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

**John 14:15 (KJV)** If ye love me, keep my commandments.

**Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV)** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **20** Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

**Luke 11:27-28 (KJV)** And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. **28** But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

**1 John 3:21-24 (KJV)** Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. **22** And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. **23** And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. **24** And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV)** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2. Realize that applying the Scriptures is not only necessary, but we should want to do so. Why?

**James 2:14-20 (KJV)** *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

3. Study! It's really hard to apply what you don't know!

**2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)** *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

4. Beware of the ugly *ism's* that can invade a heart that desires obedience: judgmentalism, legalism and perfectionism/hypocrisy.
  - When we judge, we must judge all things according to the Word. (Matt 7:1-6; 1 Cor 5:12, 6:2-5)
  - But we must never go beyond the biblical standard or exalt man's word over God's Word! (Matt 15:3; Col 2:20-23)
  - Nor should we act like we are perfect when we aren't! (Matt 23:27-28)

### **From Hearing to Doing: A Suggested Process for your Encouragement**

As our LORD is moving you from Hearing to Doing:

1. Ask, "LORD, what does this Text mean? Help me to see Your will clearly."
2. Meditate/Memorize. Think deeply about what you are reading. Repeat it over in your mind and heart. Consider it. Contemplate it. Dwell on it for awhile.
3. Study the passage for clarification as needed. (Examining context, word searches, looking at original languages, reading commentaries, tracing similar themes, etc.)
4. See the beauty in the Text. Discern the purpose and the blessing of the Text.
5. Perform a self-examination. "LORD, am I resistant to this? Are there barriers to my obedience? Why?"
6. Repent. "LORD, I'm sorry I've failed here."
7. Believe. "LORD, help me obey this Text."
8. Immediately start obeying by faith. What are you waiting for?
9. Share. Bless someone with what you have learned, or to be accountable.
10. Revisit the Text often, especially if it is a problem area.

May the Holy Spirit help us!  
Amen!