

Chapter 10. The Blessedness of the Doer.

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves...and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." –

James 1:22, 25

What a terrible deception to be content with, to delight in hearing the Word, and yet not to do it. And how terribly common, the sight of multitudes of Christians listening to the Word of God regularly and earnestly, and yet not doing it. If their own servant were to do so, hearing but **not doing**, how quick will the judgment be. And yet, so complete is the deception, that they never know that they are not living good Christian lives. What can it be that so deceives us?

There is more than one thing. One is that people misunderstand the pleasure they find in hearing, in religion and worship. The mind delights in having the truth revealed to it; the imagination is gratified by the images of the Word; the feelings are stirred by the participation of it. To an active mind, knowledge gives pleasure. A man may study some branch of science, say electricity, for the enjoyment the knowledge gives him, without the least intention of applying it practically. And so, people go to church, and enjoy the preaching, **and yet do not do what God asks**. The unconverted and the converted person alike remain content to go on in doing and confessing, and still doing the things which they ought not to do.

Another cause for deception is the terrible perversion of the doctrine (teaching) of our impotence to do good. The grace of Christ enables us to obey, to keep from sinning and to truly make us holy, is so little believed, that people practically think that there is a necessity of sinning attached to them. They think that God cannot expect an exact obedience of them, for He knows they cannot render it. This error cuts away at the very root of a determined purpose to do all God has said. It closes the heart to any earnest desire to believe and experience all God's grace can do in us and keeps people self-contented during sin. Hearing and not doing – what a terrible self-deception.

There is a third reason for it, having special reference to private Bible reading. The hearing or reading is regarded as a duty, the performance of which is considered to be a religious service. We have spent our five or ten minutes in the morning reading;

we have read thoughtfully and attentively; we have tried to take in what was read. A duty faithfully performed eases the conscience and gives a sense of satisfaction. And there is hardly any conception of the worthlessness, and more than that, of the hardening of the influence of a duty performed or of knowledge acquired, unless we go out with our whole heart set upon **literally doing and being what God's Word says He would have us and can make us**. Terrible deception. *"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

It is in the prayer closet, in the morning watch, that this deception must be fought and conquered. We may find that it will disturb our regular Bible reading and make us fall behind in our portions. It need not do this. But it is far better that it does, than that this point remains doubtful and unsettled. **Everything depends on this**. Our Lord Jesus said: *"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine (teaching), whether it is from God."* (**John 7:17**). It is only the heart that delights in God's law, and **has set its will determinedly on doing it**, that can receive the divine illumination, which spiritually knows the teaching of Christ in its Divine origin and power. Without this will **to do**, our knowledge will not profit; it remains mere head knowledge.

In life, in science and art, in business, the only way of truly knowing, is doing. What a man cannot do he, does not thoroughly know. **The only way to know God, to taste His blessedness, is through the doing of His will**. That proves whether it is a god of my own sentiment and imagination that I confess, or the true and living God who rules and works in all. It is only in doing His will that I prove I love it and accept it and make myself one with it. And there is no possible way under heaven of being united by God **but by being united to His will** in the doing of it. It is the solitude of the inner chamber, in the spirit in which I do my private Bible reading, in the determination with which I seek to have this point absolutely and finally settled, **I am going to do whatever God says**, that the awful self-deception of hearing and not doing must be conquered.

It may help us if we take some portion of God's Word and see how we are to deal with it.

Suppose it is the Sermon on the Mount - I start with the first Beatitude: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit."* I ask: What does this mean? Am I obeying the command? Am I at

least thoroughly in earnest seeking day by day to maintain this disposition? As I feel how far my proud, self-confident nature is from it, am I willing to wait, and plead with Christ, and believe that He can work it in me? Am I going **to do this** – be poor in spirit? Or shall I again be a hearer and not a doer?

And so I may go through the Beatitudes, and though the whole Sermon, with its teaching on meekness and mercy, on love and righteousness, on doing everything as unto the Father, and in everything trusting Him, on doing His will and Christ's words, verse by verse ask – **Do I know what this means? Am I doing it?** Am I what He speaks? And as always, the answer comes – I fear not, no, I see no possibility of living like this, and doing what He says, I shall be led to feel the need of an entire revision of my creed and conduct. And I shall ask whether the vow, **whatever He says I am going to do**, has ever taken the place in my Bible reading or my life which He demands that it should have.

Before I know, such questionings may begin to work in me a poverty of spirit I never knew and lead me to an entirely new insight into my need of a Christ who will breathe in me His own life **and work in me all He speaks**. I will get courage in faith to say: **I can do** all things in Him who strengthens me; whatever He says in his Word, I will do.

Prayer: Father, I am guilty of self-deception. I find so much pleasure in your Word and the Words of Christ, but I still don't do all of it. I confess that my pursuit was for knowledge and not for inner transformation of my heart. I determine, with your help, to become a doer of the Word. I believe and trust in a Saviour Who works in me all that He speaks. Whatever He says in His Word, I will do. Amen.