

# A FAITH THAT WORKS

## (A Study of the Book of James)

### Hearing and Doing

TEXT: James 1:22-25

INTRODUCTION: Before I begin today's message I want to appeal to you.

I want to take your memory back to this summer when we were reading and studying through the Book of Esther.

Remember

- Esther was a young Jewish woman abducted along with many other young women, by officers of the Persian Empire and imprisoned in the harem of the king Ahasuerus, who was seeking a new wife.
- Although she did not seek it, Esther was chosen by the king to become his wife and the Queen of Persia.
- Meanwhile, a wicked advisor to the king persuaded him to enact a decree that all the Jews in the empire would be killed in a single day in the months to come.
- Esther's older cousin Mordecai, who had adopted Esther after her parents died, has led his fellow Jews in crying out to God and pleading for His saving intervention.
- Mordecai also sent a message to Queen Esther asking her to appeal to the king to somehow spare the Jews from annihilation.
- Esther responded that for her to go to the king without invitation put her own life at great risk.
- However, sensing that God had caused her to become the Queen of Persia for such a time as this, she agreed to go to the king, saying, "If I perish, I perish."

We noted then, but we see even more clearly now the similarity of the situation to what we have **here in America**

- **Evil overflows.**
- **The forces of evil have captured much of our government** and many of our leaders, including the two top candidates for the presidency.

- **The evil one himself wants to** kill us, steal from us, and **destroy every good and righteous thing.**
- **We are caught in the middle.** As we approach the November election, each of us is most definitely in the middle concerning our pending vote.
- **What are we to do?**

And this is what I want to remind you about. What did God show us we should do in this situation through the lives of Esther and Mordecai?

### **THE FAITH OF MORDECAI AND ESTHER WAS IN GOD, NOT THE KING.**

While Esther was hoping for a positive reaction from the king, she did not consider the response of the king to be the final word. God has the final word! Esther was trusting God to make this thing right, not trusting her persuasiveness with the king.

So God gave her peace in the middle of the storm of evil. So what were they to do?

### **THE ROLE OF MORDECAI AND ESTHER**

- **PRAY**
- **DO WHAT WAS IN THEIR POWER TO DO TO PROMOTE RIGHTEOUSNESS**
  - **Do good as a citizen** (Mordecai’s reported a the plot to assassinate the king)
  - **Appeal to the king** to allow the Jews to protect themselves

We must be Mordecais and Esthers!

**OUR FAITH AS AMERICAN CHRISTIANS IS NOT IN OUR PRESIDENT** (or whom we might try to elect as our next president); **OUR FAITH IS IN GOD ALONE.**

I told you in July these very words, “I will be honest and say that at this moment it looks like God may be saying very clearly to us American Christians, your confidence, your trust, your faith cannot be in your president or in your government. It must be in Me alone!”

I would not always claim to be so prophetic, but I think you will have to admit that on this one, I was right.

So?

**WHILE EVIL FLOURISHES IN OUR NATION, WHAT IS OUR ROLE AS AMERICAN CHRISTIANS?**

- **PRAY** – We need to pray for ourselves, our families, our churches, our communities, and our nation as we have never prayed before!
- **DO WHAT IS IN OUR POWER TO DO TO PROMOTE RIGHTEOUSNESS**
  - **Be good citizens without disobeying God.**
  - **Choose the best leaders we can.**

And I know. You say, “There aren’t any!”

But there are. They just aren’t the ones left running for president.

But there are good people running for other offices, and we need to support them!

But when it comes to voting for president, folks we also still have an obligation given us by God to render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and in a democratic republic such as the United States, that means we need to vote, even when the choices are not good.

I think most of you join me in having the greatest respect for Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, and the leader God has used in the development of Samaritan’s Purse and Operation Christmas Child of which we are a part, and is a marvelous ministry that brings help, hope, and the gospel of Jesus Christ to children all around our world.

Franklin has not endorsed a candidate in this election.

Listen to what he has to say.

Franklin Graham

October 8 at 7:38am

The crude comments made by Donald J. Trump more than 11 years ago cannot be defended. But the godless progressive agenda of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton likewise cannot be defended. I am not endorsing any candidates in this election. I have said it throughout this presidential campaign, and I will say it again – both candidates are flawed. The only hope for the United States is God. Our nation’s many sins have permeated our society, leading us to where we are today. But as Christians we can’t back down from our responsibility to remain engaged in the politics of our nation. On November 8<sup>th</sup> we will all have a choice to make. The two candidates have very different visions for the future of America. The most important issue of this election is the Supreme Court. That impacts everything. There’s no question, Trump and Clinton scandals might be news for the moment, but who they appoint to the Supreme Court will remake the fabric of our society for our children and our grandchildren, for generations to come.

Folks, as bad as it is and even if it becomes worse before Election Day, and it probably will, I am convinced that **God’s Word says to us**

- **Trust in God alone.**
- **Pray**
- **Be good citizens – vote!**
- **Make the best choice you can make to promote righteousness.**

That’s what I’m going to do! And that is why I am wearing this little sticker that says I pledge to vote.

I see some of you are already wearing one.

I encourage all of you who are of age to vote, to make that pledge to God, and then fulfill it!

If you will do that, I encourage you to take a sticker and wear it as a testimony to others. Some of our folks will have more stickers available after the service in the mall area.

Join me in praying for our nation.

Now in what time I have left, I want to take us back to the Book of James.

Stand with me as we read.

James 1:22–25 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The structure of this passage is simple, but its message to us is of critical importance.

## **AN INSTRUCTION**

### **AN ILLUSTRATIVE PICTURE**

### **A PROMISE**

## **I. THE INSTRUCTION**

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

God did not give His Word to us

- To entertain us
- To give us something to think about
- Not even merely to inform us
- But **God gave His Word to instruct us in**
  - **what we are to think**
  - **what we are to be**
  - **what we are to do**

And when we hear the Word or read the Word, God expects us to do what it says.

Be **doers** of the word, and not hearers only.

When we go to Lifechange Groups and study the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, the Almighty expects us to leave that place putting what we have heard and read and learned into practice immediately.

When we are in worship and hear the Word, God expects us to do it.

Before I ever preach it to you, I have wrestled at least for a week with not only what it means, and how to try to best explain that meaning to you, but for what it instructs us to do. And I have had to wrestle with how I am to do that Word before I ever take part in bringing that Word to you.

And with this instruction, comes a two word warning,

It is only a two word warning, but I remember in my childhood that the most powerful warnings I ever got just came in two words. That was when my mother looked at me and said, MICHAEL CLAUNCH!

Well, here the two word warning is

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving yourselves.**

God says, “If you are just hearing the Word but not putting it into practice, you are deceiving yourself.

- You’re not fooling me, God says.
- You’re not fooling other people for long, because they see your life.

- You are only fooling yourself into thinking you are doing what you´re supposed to do by just listening politely or reading casually the Word of God, but not obeying it, not doing it!

Folks, people come to church all the time and deceive themselves into thinking they are Christians.

- They listen, as we have today, to marvelous music about the wonderful grace of God.
- They even think about that grace shown most perfectly to us by the Lord Jesus upon the cross.
- But week after week, they just hear about grace.
- They never do anything about grace.
- They never respond to God´s grace with faith.
- They never repent of their own sin.
- They never trust Jesus as their own Lord and Savior.
- But because they heard about grace, they think they are Christians. They deceive themselves.

And many a born again Christian think they are maturing in the Lord, growing in their faith, walking with Christ because they regularly sit in LCG and worship and hear and read the Bible, the Word of God. And they smile, shake hands, and talk with other folks at church and think they are just what God wants them to be, but they are deceived.

- They hear the Word of God, but it is like water on a ducks back.
- They hear the Word of God, but the next week they don´t do it.
- They are no better man, no better woman, no better son or daughter than they were the week before.
- They are not more faithful to the Lord.
- They are not more devoted to Christ.
- They are not more faithful in their giving or in their serving,
- Because all they did was hear the Word.
- They did not do the Word and therefore they are deceiving themselves.

Now to be sure we understand, the Holy Spirit through James gives us

## II. AN ILLUSTRATIVE PICTURE

James 1:23–24 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

**A. The Word of God enables us to see ourselves as God sees us.**

The Bible serves as a mirror, but it shows us not what we think of ourselves, but reveals what God thinks of us.

And when used properly, it will convict us

- of things that need to be changed
- of ways we need to grow
- of corrections that need to be made
- of service that needs to be done

**B. So, the man or woman who is a doer of the Word,**

- makes those changes
- grows in the Lord
- makes corrections where needed
- serves the Lord with gladness in meaningful and fruitful ways

**C. but the one who hears the Word but does not do it, is like a person**

- with a smudge of dark grease on his forehead
- some sauce from lunch on the edges of his mouth
- some lettuce stuck between their two front teeth

and they look in the mirror and see it all, and then lay the mirror down and do nothing about themselves.

Friend, don't you know that every week, along about Wednesday or Thursday, God looks down on so many of us who sat on pews or comfortable chairs in their churches on Sunday and heard and read the Word of the Living God, and aided by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God convicted them

- of smudges in their life,
- of dirty things that soiled their purity before the Lord of hosts,
- things that distracted from their witness or their faithfulness or their service,

and THEY SAW THEM. THEY HEARD. BUT THEY DID NOTHING!

Oh, dear sweet Lord Jesus, how many times have we done that?

Oh, Crucified Christ Who bore our sins upon the cross, how many in this place are doing that right now?

How many will hear the simple message You sent through Esther and Mordecai about what to do when evil is flourishing all about you in the nation where you live but will do nothing about what they heard?

They have no intent to do the Word. They're saying right now, "I'm not going to vote."

How many in this place and other churches this morning in America are thinking, "I'm not going to look at what the candidates believe, or support, or promise to do. I'm not going to take time to see what the party platforms stand for. I'm going to vote according to my family tradition. My granddaddy died this or that, and that's what I'm going to be too."

Hearers, but not doers of the Word, deceiving themselves.

Finally,

### **III. A PROMISE**

**James 1:25** But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Many people read this and they say, what is this "perfect law of liberty?" This phrase has no secret or hidden meaning. Only James uses it, and he repeats it in chapter two. It simply means the Word of God.

Ps. 19 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect,"

God's law, God's truth, God's Word brings liberty, freedom.

James is simply saying, "the person who continually looks at the perfect Word of God that offers freedom, and does not just hear and forget what it teaches but does it, will be blessed!

- God will bless him.
- God will bless her.

How many times recently have you prayed and asked God in Heaven to bless you?

He will. He promises. If you will just regularly read and hear the Word of God, let it show you what God wants of you, and then go out with intentionality and will do what the Word says,

**GOD WILL BLESS YOU!**