

Both Hearing and Doing

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BY Guest Writer

Scripture Reading: James 1:19-27, Proverbs 10:19, Ephesians 4:26-27, Romans 5:20

I've always been a little uncomfortable while getting my hair cut. Perhaps it's my nervousness that I've directed my stylist the wrong way, or that the color we picked won't work at all with my skin tone. But beyond the anxiety that comes from letting someone else take control for a few hours, there's a measured amount of discomfort that comes from looking at myself in the mirror for that long.

Every blemish seems to glow under the lights of my local salon. My eyebrows seem significantly more unruly than I thought they had become, and the makeup I had so carefully applied hours ago has mostly melted away, revealing the oh-so-telling dark circles under my very tired eyes.

And yet when I leave, somehow I always feel so much better. I've been transformed—or at least my hair has.

It is transformation and the confidence that comes with it that James is urging us to seek through the reading of the Word. Of course, it's much less superficial and quite a bit harder than sitting in a salon chair. James tells us that when we hear the Word of God and don't act, then we are just like a man sitting in front of a mirror, seeing all his blemishes and yet walking away without caring, without doing anything.

If looking in the mirror is hard, looking deep into the Word of God is harder— especially when reading James's words. They reflect back to me my own anger, my quickness to speak, my moral failures, my pride.

But being transformed by the Word means becoming a doer, not just a hearer. It means inviting the Holy Spirit to carve out those ugly places and fill them with the righteousness that Jesus gives, so that I might live out what James calls a "pure and undefiled religion" (1:27). **The Word becomes more than a book to me; it is a means of grace, a tool of the Spirit's sanctifying work in my heart.**

Jesus said it this way:

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

– Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus is the Word made flesh, sent to dwell among us. We are called to look daily not into a mirror, but into the Word—into the very face of Jesus.

The gospel-filled life Christ calls us to is not one full of quick and angry words, self-serving pride, or self-sufficiency, but of sacrificial love and humility. We are called to let the Word do its work inside us—to read it daily with fresh eyes as it, by the Holy Spirit, reads our hearts and transforms us, making us more and more like Jesus.

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