

An Exhortation and Caution

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of living out our faith through obedience to God's word and warns against self-deception in our spiritual lives.

Scripture: Matthew 7:16, Matthew 7:22, Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 4:1, James 1:22, James 4:17, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Christian Obedience"

Description

James Smith preaches on the importance of being doers of the word, not just hearers, emphasizing that the Word of God is our daily counselor, guide, and friend, containing all necessary for comfort, direction, and safety. He urges Christians to walk in wisdom, love, and loyalty in various roles and relationships, highlighting the need for obedience, humility, and submission. Smith warns against self-deception, stressing the importance of genuine faith, holiness, and sanctification through the Word. He encourages believers to examine themselves, ensuring their faith is evidenced by good works and a life that glorifies God.

Transcript

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only--deceiving your own selves." James 1:22

"To him that knows to do good, and does it not--to him it is sin." James 4:17

The Word of God is intended to be our daily counselor, guide, and friend. It contains all that is necessary to be known for our comfort, direction, and safety. It never flatters our vanity, nourishes our fears, or sanctions our sins. It comprises all that is necessary for doctrine, correction and instruction in righteousness. Its doctrines are all true, important, and holy: they are to be believed, published and enjoyed. Its ordinances are simple, plain, and significant: and are to be observed by all who reverence, believe, and hope in God. Its precepts are appropriate, necessary, and wise; adapted to all our situations in society, and are to be cheerfully, constantly, and universally obeyed. "Be doers of the word!"

As Christians we are to walk in wisdom, with kindness, and mercy, toward the world; remembering that grace alone has made us to differ. As brethren in Christ, united by the endearing ties of spiritual love, in gospel fellowship, we are to walk in love, unity, and peace; as those who being one with Christ, are influenced by the same Spirit, and walk by the same rule. As subjects of the kingdom of Immanuel, we are required to walk with loyalty, courage and sincerity; as sincere in our profession, and upright in our hearts.

As the sons of God by adoption and regeneration, we should walk in humility, submission, and holy fear, as always in the presence of our loving Father, and gracious God. As temples of the Holy Spirit, we are required to carry ourselves towards him as dependants, as set apart for his glory and praise: sowing to the Spirit, minding the things of the Spirit, and being careful that we do not grieve him. In all our relations in the world we are exhorted to be examples, not only professing--but "doing the will of God from the heart."

Fathers are commanded to be kind, attentive, and patient.

Children are commanded to be obedient, submissive, and attentive.

Husbands are commanded to be loving, industrious, and prudent.

Wives are commanded to be submissive, affectionate, and modest.

Masters are commanded to be just, considerate, and feeling.

Servants are commanded to be honest, industrious, and willing.

And we all are commanded "study to be quiet," and each one to mind his own business; because a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price.

These distinctions in life, Jehovah has ordained, and these duties the same God has commanded and requires: therefore we are bidden to perform them, not as pleasing men but God, who tries our hearts: nor can they be rejected or neglected without sin, and some measure of correction if we are the Lord's people.

Our character, duty, state, and privileges are defined and set forth in God's word for our comfort, direction, and spiritual profit: doctrines, ordinances, and duties are united by the wisdom and love of God; and it is very unfitting for worms of the earth to attempt to disunite them. "What God has joined together let no man put asunder." He has made provision for our weakness in his dear Son, for our ignorance in his holy word, and for our idleness and waywardness in his chastising rod; mercy and grace are promised to help us, the Spirit to lead us into truth, and the rod to drive folly from us. Weakness is no excuse, for God has provided, the plea of inability cannot be admitted, for God has invited and exhorted us to "ask, and receive." If there was no provision, we might plead our weakness; if no direction, our ignorance; if no authority, our slavery; but now we see every excuse cut off, and the slothful servant must be speechless before God at last.

The commands of God are positive, not merely negative; we are not only to abstain from evil--but to do good. Life is given us for activity, and opportunities to prove our sincerity; our benevolence is not to be confined, nor our efforts suspended; we are to do good to all, and not be weary of well-doing. Our obedience must be willing service, doing the will of God from the heart; if our minds are spiritual--his commandments are not grievous: but his yoke is easy and his burden light.

God accepts not eye-service, performed in slavish fear; nor approves of that obedience which is a burden--but the obedience of faith, love, and gratitude he does accept. Believing the love which God has for us; the relation in which he stands unto us, (as a Father;) the provision he has made, the mercies he has bestowed, and the salvation he has freely given us; the honor he has put upon us, with the designs of his wisdom respecting us--we love him; and loving him, we desire to honor, obey and glorify him. Love sets the soul on flame to render again according to all that the Lord has done for us; and gratitude, sweet gratitude, oils the wheels of the soul and inspires us to cry out, "I will run in the way of your commandments, for you have enlarged my heart."

The command should be viewed as proceeding from Jesus, our dear and adorable Savior, who laid down his life for us; as backed with the most powerful arguments drawn from Bethlehem's manger, Gethsemane's garden, Calvary's cross, Joseph's sepulcher, Olivet's mount, and the glorious high throne above, where he ever lives to make intercession for us: and surely arguments indited by purest love, written in characters of blood, and breathing in every line peace, good-will, and an ardent desire for our permanent happiness, must have weight, must be powerful to move even such hearts as ours! The design which our gracious God has in view in every New Testament command is our good, in connection with the honor of Jesus, and his own glory and praise. All his precepts issue from a throne of grace, are the offspring of paternal kindness, and could not be dispensed with, but at our loss.

The kindness of our Lord cautions us against being satisfied with merely hearing or reading the word--unless we are sanctified through it: the great design of preaching or reading the word is our sanctification; and therefore our Redeemer prayed, "Sanctify them through your truth, your word is truth." Reading the word or hearing it explained should never satisfy us, unless its sanctifying effects are felt in our hearts and evidenced in our lives! Or to use Paul's beautiful figure, unless we are delivered into it as into a mold, and bear the impressions of its sacred character about us wherever we go. The word preached did not profit the Jews of old, they not being united unto it by faith; therefore the Apostle exhorts us to fear and labor. Heb 4:1, 2, 11.

Never should we consider that we are safe or in the right way, merely because we can hear the word with satisfaction, or remember it with ease; unless it spring up and bring forth fruit to the glory of divine grace. "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Awful! most awful must be the character of the self-deceiver, who like the foolish virgins, or those referred to in (Matthew 7:22, 23.) think that they are right until Jesus from within, when the door is shut, assures them they are wrong. Such a thing is more than possible, for we have evidence all around us that many such characters exist; hearers, talkers, and professors abound in every direction; who by the spirit they manifest, the unsanctified tempers they habitually display, and the forbidden conduct in which they indulge, without remorse or contrition, prove that they deceive themselves. For if any man, however sound his creed, has not the Spirit of Christ--he is none of his: and without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Presuming on the goodness of their state, and resting in a creed or form of godliness, while destitute of the power; they pass on persuaded they are the Lord's and shall finally be glorified with him in Heaven--whose word they pervert, whose name they profane, whose cause they injure, and on whose love they presume. But shall they escape by their iniquity? No, "be not deceived, for God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows That shall he also reap. For he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

They that are after the flesh, do, notwithstanding all their profession to the contrary, mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. "And to be carnally minded is death--but to be spiritual minded is life and peace." The Lord intimates in many portions of his word, that many professors will thus deceive themselves, and we find judging from their fruits that it is even so. Let us then benefit by the beneficial caution, "Take heed that you be not deceived. Be not high minded but fear." Let us not rest satisfied without good evidence--but let us examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith. If we say that we have faith--what does our faith produce? What are its works? We hear, receive, and profess to love the truth--but where are its sanctifying effects?

Do they appear in the family, in the business, in the world, in the church, and in all the relations of life? Are we doers of the word? or only hearers, deceiving ourselves? "Trust in the Lord and DO good," is the direction of Scripture. Rest the whole weight of the soul's salvation, upon the glorious person, perfect work, rich grace, immutable word, and office character of Jesus; cast all your cares upon your Father who is in Heaven, who cares for you; and then "do good:" let your light so shine before men that they seeing your good works may glorify God in the day of visitation. Evidence to all around you that Christ is formed in you, lives in you, and that you live to him; that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and a vessel of mercy prepared for eternal glory.

Remember, my dear friends, Jesus has said, "By their fruits--you shall know them." No man is required to believe your words--unless they are corroborated by your works. Consider the name you profess, the cause you have espoused, the truths you hear, the church you are connected with, the guide you profess to follow and the end of the Christian's race; all, all are characterized by holiness; it is a holy name, a holy cause, a holy gospel, a holy people, a way of holiness, and a holy Heaven. Let me then exhort you seriously to examine yourselves. The matter is of solemn and infinite importance. Profession is vain without possession. We must every one of us give account of himself to God, we must appear naked, stripped of every false disguise in the sight of the Lord, and then self-examination will be too late. Eternity renders everything connected with it momentous; therefore trifle not, presume not--but look well to the foundation of your hope.

Are you founded upon a Rock? Are you keeping the sayings of Jesus, and doing them? Or, are you resting upon a little knowledge, a few gifts, and a mere profession? If so, your fall will be great, your end awful, and your pretensions prove to be nothing but wind and confusion.

Better make no profession of faith in Jesus, than to profess only to dishonor. Better never to have known the Way Of Righteousness, than knowing, refuse to walk in it. Wrath will come upon such unto the uttermost, and they shall receive the greater damnation. It is only empty professors who crucify the Son of God afresh, who do despite unto the Spirit of grace, who turn the grace of God unto lasciviousness; let us therefore watch and be sober, let us cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light, let us walk honestly as in the day. We have not a moment to call our own, all and each is the Lord's; therefore let us not trifle: we have professedly resigned ourselves and all we possess into the gracious hands of Jesus, therefore let us remember it is sacrilege to lend them to Satan, or employ them in sin.

We are the Lord's, so we declared when we put on the profession of his name; let us therefore aim in all things to glorify his name, adorn our profession, and benefit his cause upon earth. We must give an account of ourselves to God; we shall be rewarded according to our works; let us therefore be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know, (being informed by the word before hand,) that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Being loved with an everlasting love, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit--let us so think, speak, and act, that God may be glorified in us, by us, and through us.

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