

Practical Christianity

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

Christianity is a life based on, and produced by, a certain system of truth. It involves certain facts, plus the meaning of the facts, plus experience based upon these.

We must first of all be hearers of the Word. In the Bible, there is no toning down of the importance of doctrine. Our text does not say "Not hearers," but "Not hearers ONLY" — that is very different. Modern religion minimises the importance of knowledge and belief of Christian truth. The idea is that it does not matter what we believe; that a person's life is the important thing. Many professing Christians today are grossly ignorant of the biblical system of truth. This is both wrong and deplorable. To be Christians, we must first of all be hearers of the Word — the Word of God, the Holy Bible, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We must also be doers of the Word. It is the very nature of the Christian message that it demands practical expression in the life — not only impressions, but expression.

The mere hearer of the Word is a self-deceived person. There exist, of course, downright hypocrites, self-conscious pretenders to piety. But the real hypocrite is not self-deceived; on the contrary, he is trying to deceive others. Our text speaks of the self-deceived, those who think themselves good, faithful Christians, when they really are not. The person who is a hearer of the Word but not a doer is self-deceived. The truth of God goes "in one ear and out the other." He unconsciously divorces his religion from his life, and accepts the truth as mere information. The person who claims to accept the doctrines and principles of God's word, but fails to make any earnest effort to practice them, does not really accept them; he only thinks he does; he is self-deceived. His formal religion has no real impact on his life. For this very reason it is comfortable and convenient. Practical Christianity, on the other hand makes a real difference in a person's life. It involves being born again, personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, an earnest effort to obey God's law, a constant striving after holiness, a real separation from that "world" system that is contrary to God.

The world, in its selfishness, unbelief and sin, is headed for divine wrath and judgment. "The wicked shall be cast into hell." Nominal and formal Christians are being dragged along toward hell by the God-forgetting world. Does your religion make you feel uncomfortable in this sinful world? Does it make you stand up against the trend of the times? Does it make you struggle upstream against the current? Does it ever involve any real sacrifice in your life? What sacrifice have you made for the sake of Christ? How has your relation to the Lord Jesus made you live differently from people who do not know him? — "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

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