

Doctrinal Summary of Spiritual Development & Maturity-Requires Focused Obedience

In James 1:22, James identifies that believers must become those who accomplish the word of God.

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

The word “prove” is translated from the Koine Greek word γίνεσθε (“gi-nes-theh”) which more literally means, “you all are commanded to participate in being acted upon in a continuous type of action to come into a new state or characteristic through transition from one state to another.” Simply, it means to become something you are not yet. But it is a command, which challenges the believer’s free will to make the determination that he will obey. The believer is to put himself into the position where he can be acted upon by another (the Holy Spirit) to become a doer of the word, not just a hearer. The position in which the believer is to put himself is fellowship with God through humility (cf. James 1:21; 1 John 1:5-10). If he does not humble himself before God, repent, then confess his sins, then he will not be in the proper position for the Holy Spirit to make him a doer of the word. Thus, to become a doer of the word requires first that the believer be in walking in fellowship with God in humility.

The word “doers” is translated from the Koine Greek word ποιηταὶ (“poi-ae-tai”) which more literally means, “accomplishers, based on initiation.” It identifies that someone has carried out a process to its completion and accomplished something as a result. Those who are “accomplishers” are those who initiate the action to obey God’s instruction by their own free will. Therefore, they are “accomplishers, based on initiation.” Being an accomplisher of God’s word is a purposeful decision that must be consciously made. Those who do not consciously make the decision to obey God’s word and be its accomplisher are merely hearers of the word and not doers.

The word “hearers” is translated from the Koine Greek word ἀκροαταὶ (“ah-kro-ah-tai”) which more literally means, “those who hear passively resulting in no impact from what was heard, based on initiation.” It identifies those who hear something with their sense of hearing, but do not allow what is heard to enter into their mind for evaluation or transfer to the heart (belief system). There is no concept of obedience or active listening to ἀκροαταὶ, merely hearing without any personal attention or relationship to what is heard. Because there is no personal or mental attention to what is being heard there is no application of its message. Thus, those who hear the word of God passively are no different than those who hear background music played throughout their day. They are completely unaffected by it, despite enjoying its beauty in the moment. They have chosen this by their own initiation.

Believers must become more than passive hearers who sit in the pews on Sunday mornings and enjoy the message of the pastor. Instead, they must become those who accomplish what God’s word instructs. This requires focused, purposeful attention to its message, and focused, purposeful determination to rely upon it moment by moment. In this, believers are able to grow spiritually as the Holy Spirit teaches them through what is being communicated by the word of God (cf. 1 John 2:27).

Spiritual development requires the purposeful decision of believers to become obedient to the word of God, not just hear its words. Doing so allows believers to walk free from sin because of their obedience to what they are taught (cf. Rom. 6:17-18). The more time believers spend walking free from sin, the longer they walk having fellowship with God. The longer they walk having fellowship with God, the more they understand who He is and become like Him. This requires a disciplined focus to obey God.