

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Stop Kidding Yourself

James 1:19-27

Part One

Let us read **James 1:19-27** “**This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (21) Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (22) But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; (24) For once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. (25) But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (26) If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless. (27) This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**” The emphasis in this section of Scripture is on the dangers of self-deception. Look again at **V. 22** “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**” And now look at **V. 26**, “**If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.**” It is very easy for people to deceive themselves.

For instance, a married man could find himself asking a young woman at his workplace to go out to lunch, telling her that he did not want to eat by himself and actually believing what he told her. If one of his friends asked him about it; he might explain that it was totally innocent. She is just a friend. Then later he might take her out to lunch several more times; each time saying to himself she is only a friend, and besides it is better to eat with a friend than to eat alone. But as time passes, he finds himself sharing personal things, not only about himself but also about his wife. Another friend of his talks to him and says, "You seem to be getting very close to this young woman." He again says she is "just a friend", but this time he feels it necessary to declare that there is nothing going on between them. But even as he finds himself having to make stronger and bolder statements in his defense to others, he is able to deceive himself to think that everything is OK. But the truth is, things are very wrong. And if nothing changes it will only be a matter of time until the lusts of the flesh that have been so actively at work but covered over by self-deception will bring forth sin and ultimately death.

People, when they don’t want to see something, can be very blind. We should not think that this applies just to others but to ourselves as well. We must be constantly vigilant in this area. One specific area of self-deception that the Scripture repeatedly mentions as an area of concern is the area of our salvation. Why would someone choose to be blind in this particular area? For the very simple reason that it is much easier to think of yourself as a disciple of Christ than to be a disciple. As long as people can fool themselves into believing that they are a Christian when they are not, can continue to live their lives as they please.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

They can use their time, energy and resources in the way they want without any accountability to God. All they have to do is to continue to check off their “Christian” boxes and they can make themselves feel okay. It might mean that they will go to church. It might be that they will be ministering in the children’s Sunday School or even give some money. But if they can check off enough boxes, just like the Jewish Pharisees we read about in the Gospels, they can deceive themselves into believing that they are saved when they are not. Because it is so easy for people to deceive themselves, it is important that we as professing Christians take the time, as **2 Cor. 13:5** tells us, to **“Examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith.”**

But how can we know whether or not our faith is real? Whether or not it is genuine? Whether or not it is saving? Whether or not it is living? We can know by applying the tests that God gives us throughout the Bible.

James certainly is a good start in helping us in this matter. What is the theme of James? Tests of Living Faith!! This epistle was written for the very purpose of self examination to see whether or not we are truly a part of God’s family. What is the first test that we find in the Book of James? The “Response to Trials test.” But now in the second chapter of James we come to the next test. This is the “Response to the Word of God test.” The way we receive and practice the Word of God is another test that is very definitive when we are seeking to discover whether or not we truly are a part of the family of God or not.

In **Luke 11:14-28** Jesus is giving instruction concerning Satan. In this passage Jesus had been accused of casting out demons in the power of Beelzebub. Beelzebub was one of the names of the Philistine god Baal (2 Kings 1:1-3). The Jews who were making this accusation against Christ often used this name when referring to Satan. In refuting this accusation, Jesus stated that there is a present warfare that is taking place between Satan and Christ. In **V. 23** Jesus makes it very clear that it is impossible to be neutral in this spiritual battle. What did Christ say? **“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.”** It is impossible to be neutral in this spiritual war, for neutrality means standing against Him. There are two spiritual forces at work in the world, and we must choose between them. Satan is scattering and destroying, but Jesus Christ is gathering and building. We must make a choice, and if we choose to make no choice, we are really choosing against Him.

And taking sides with Jesus means more than saying the right things. Jesus makes this point in **Luke 11:27,28** **“And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed.”** This was very nice of her to say this, and I have no reason to doubt that she wasn’t sincere, but that was not enough. How did Jesus respond? **“On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God, and observe it.”** Let me put this another way. The person who is truly blessed or saved is not the person who simply says the right things but the one who **RESPONDS PROPERLY TO THE WORD OF GOD.** And this is James’s point in **James 1:19-27** , but he goes further than Jesus and expands on it.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

THE RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD TEST

The proper response to the Word of God begins with a PROPER RECEPTION of biblical truth. Let us read **VV. 19-21** **“This you know my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (21) Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”** The key word in these three verses is the word **“receive”** which we find in **V. 21**. Certainly we can never think of ourselves as saved if we have not received the Word. But saved people don’t just receive the Word. They **“receive the word implanted.”** The verse says that it is the **“word implanted that is able to save our souls.”** In order for this to happen we need to receive the word in a certain way. First of all, we need to RECEIVE THE WORD WITH A SUBMISSIVE HEART. This submission is manifested when we find ourselves being obedient to the three commands found in **VV. 19-21**.

THE FIRST COMMAND THAT HE GIVES US IS TO BE “QUICK TO HEAR.” If we are going to receive the word with a submissive heart then we must be able to see ourselves as someone who is “quick to hear.” But what does this mean?

Does it mean that we need to cultivate the virtue of being a good listener? Certainly being a good listener is a wonderful quality. Wilson Mizner, in talking about the virtue of being a good listener said “A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after awhile he knows something.” But even though I believe that the virtues of being a good listener is quite obvious to us, I don’t believe that this is the specific meaning of this phrase at all. Being quick to hear is not referring to our listening skills but rather to how we are responding to the Word of God.

Remember verse 18 and what it said, **“In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.”** After James makes these wonderful statements in **V. 18** then he says in **V. 19** **“This you know, my beloved brethren.....”** What do they know? They know that they have been brought forth by the Word of truth. They know that through the Word of truth they have passed from death to life. They know that through the Word of truth they have become “as it were the first fruits among His creatures.” In other words, they know that they have come to enjoy a very special standing before the Lord through the Word of truth. They know this. But James is not yet done emphasizing to them the important role of the Scriptures.

So now he says in **V. 19** **“This you know, my beloved brethren but let everyone be quick to hear.....”** Hear what? God’s word! If this is not clear to us in the transition from **V. 18** to **V.19** then it should be clear to us in the transition from **VV. 19 & 20** to **V. 21** when it says, **“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”** When we read the words, “quick to hear” in **V. 19** , we should not primarily think of a person who is a good listener but rather someone who is quick to hear the Word of God.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

God's word is the agent of change in our lives. Whether that is in establishing our positional righteousness before the Lord which we see in **V. 18** or in establishing our practical righteousness in **VV. 19-21**. Because James knows this to be true, he calls every Christian to be quick to hear the Word of God.

We hopefully now know that we are to have ears to hear the Word of God. But what is James trying to convey to us by using the word "quick?" Perhaps the literal reading of the verse might help. Literally it would read, "be quick to the hearing." When James is speaking about being "**quick**" he is talking about our appetite for the Word of God. He is talking about someone who is eager and attentive, ready to receive and assimilate the message heard.

Is this what characterizes your life? There is not a single professing believer here this weekend that has not at some point in their Christian life or at several points in their Christian life lacked eagerness or attentiveness or a readiness to assimilate the truths of God's Word, but what is your pattern? What might a person like this look like?

I believe that this person would personally know where his Bible is located. I believe that he would not only know where it is but he is frequently picking it up as he has opportunity. I would think that television, or hobbies, or projects would not be able to squeeze out from his life time spent in reading, meditating and reflecting on His Word and trying to conform himself to it.

I would think that his appetite for the Word would cause him to seek out a church home where the Word of God is faithfully and boldly taught and that he would make every effort to be there along with his family. This does not mean that he could not get to take his family away on vacation or that he might not have the freedom to miss a Sunday once in a while. But there would be a commitment to be in the worship services of the church, and he would if possible be involved in other Bible classes offered at the church. (ATTEND ADULT CLASSES BUT YOU SAY THAT YOUR CHILDREN CANNOT HANDLE THAT. I WOULD THINK YOU NEED TO RETHINK THAT)

The proper response to the Word of God is that we would receive it in a certain way. This, first of all means that we must receive it with a submissive heart. If we receive the Word of God with a submissive heart then we will be "quick to hear." And this means that we will be eager, attentive, ready to receive and assimilate the message into our lives. But there is more. Not only do we need to be quick to hear, but we also need to be slow to speak.

THE SECOND COMMAND THAT JAMES GIVES IS TO BE SLOW TO SPEAK

Let us look again at **V. 19** and see what it says, "**This you know, my beloved. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak**" Now what does this mean? It would certainly seem reasonable, in light of the context, that James again is relating this not so much to areas of general speech but rather again to matters related to speaking the Word of God.

This might at first glance appear rather surprising. The reason why it might be surprising would be that Scriptures encourage us to be bold in our speaking rather than slow in our speaking. Certainly this is true of the Gospel message.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Listen to Paul's words in **Eph. 6:19** **“And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.”**

Speaking the truth of God's word boldly does not stop with the gospel message. Consider Paul's exhortation to Timothy in **2 Tim. 4:2** **“preach the Word ; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”** This does not appear to be encouraging Timothy to be quiet about what he knows. But you might say, but this relates to very prominent Christian leaders. Perhaps they are in a different category than ourselves. But certainly this is not what we see in the book of Acts as we see the church going throughout the whole world boldly proclaiming the truth of God's Word.

So why is James commanding Christians to be, **“Slow to speak?”** Though we are to be bold and though we are to continually seeking to minister the truth in love we should not be careless in the way we do this.

There apparently was a problem among the believers to whom James was writing. There were people apparently thought that they could represent themselves as a spokesman for God without proper preparation. Look at **James 3:1**. What does it say? **“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.”** “Being slow to speak” means that people should not be so quick to speak for God if they are not prepared morally or biblically to do so.

And this would appear to be the thrust of what James is saying in **1:19**. Be careful before you represent yourself as a spokesman of God. If our lives are not yielded to the Lord or if we have not spent time seeking to truly know the Word of God teaches, let us not presume to be His spokesman. Or as James says be “slow to speak.” This shows a proper respect for the Word and a submissiveness it. The Word of God is to be held in a place of high honor. It should not be served on dirty plates or served up without proper attention to details.

There are people that are so messed up personally and who have compromised themselves in so many different areas of conduct that they need to be very careful before they speak up. There are people who have such a low view of the Word of God that they spend very little time truly reflecting on it. These people need to be very careful before they speak up.

But if you are morally righteous, and if you have been actively pursuing the truth, then certainly when given the opportunity, you should proclaim the truth and proclaim it boldly.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

CONCLUSION

How can we know whether or not our faith is genuine? We need to first of all apply the “Response to Trials test.” Are we persevering in our love for God or our we not? The next test we need to apply is the Response to the Word test. In evaluating whether or not we have properly responded to the Word, we must first look at the way that we have received the Word. It begins with a heart of submission. This heart is manifested when we see ourselves being obedient to three very specific commands found in **VV. 19-21**. The first command is to be “quick to hear.” We need to be able to look at our lives and see an eagerness to feed on the Scriptures. We need to be able to see an appetite. But this is not all. We also need to be “slow to speak.” The Word of God is to hold a place of high honor for ourselves when it is received and it should not be served on dirty plates or served up without proper attention to details. We need to be careful before we serve up what we think to be the truths of God’s Word.