

**Stop Kidding Yourself**  
**James 1:19-27**  
**Part Two**

What is the theme of James? Tests of living faith!! This epistle was written so that we might know whether or not we are saved or not saved. What is the first test that we find in the Book of James? The “Response to Trials test.” This particular test is found in **James 1:2-18**. We have now begun to consider the second test of living faith and that is the “Response to the Word test.” This test is found in **James 1:19-27**. The way we receive and respond to 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.

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 in respect to their salvation. In order to keep this from happening we need to be sure that we are responding properly to the Word of God as it is described in this passage.

The first part of a proper response to the Word of God is a **“Proper reception.”** And a proper reception means we will need to receive the Word of God in such a way that it becomes implanted. Our reception must not be superficial but deeply personal. Not every heart is prepared to receive the Word in this way. This is clear in the parable of the soils in **Matt. 13**. For the Word to be properly received so that it becomes implanted and bears fruit, we must have a submissive heart. A person with a submissive heart will be obedient to the three commands that we find in **V. 19**, **“This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.”** None of these commands can be obeyed unless we are willing to bow before the Word of God and give God’s Word its proper place, or in other words, none of these commands can be obeyed unless we have a submissive heart. What is the meaning of these three commands?

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“**Quick to hear**” ..... Being quick to hear is not referring to our listening skills in general but rather to how we are responding to the Word of God. This is clear from the context. The emphasis on being “quick” is talking about our appetite for the Scriptures. It is talking about someone who is eager and attentive, ready to receive and assimilate the message heard.

The person who is quick to hear certainly would not only be actively seeking to understand as much of the Scriptures as possible through his own efforts, but he would also be putting himself in a position to come under the teaching of others.

In fact, as I shared with you last week, this most likely is the emphasis of this passage. The NT Scriptures were not readily available to these readers. If they were going to be exposed to the teaching of the Apostles, they would have to seek out teachers.

How do you see yourself in light of this command? Have you been quick to pick up the Word of God to read it and study it? Have you been quick to take advantage of the opportunities to come under the teaching ministry of this church? Has this emphasis been obvious to yourself and others? If it has, then you should be encouraged. This communicates very powerfully that you have given the Word of God its proper place in your life and therefore could be defined as having a submissive heart.

But James is not yet finished. There is a second command. Not only are we to be “quick to hear” but we are also to be “slow to speak.”

### SLOW TO SPEAK

What does this mean? We must, I believe, understand it again in light of the context. The context involves what? A proper response to the Word of God. It is the Word of God that brought us forth in **V. 18** and it is the “**word implanted which is able to save our souls**” in **V. 21**. What is James talking about in **James 1:19-21**? He is talking about the Word. Therefore we need to understand this command in light of the Word. What is James commanding us to do? He is commanding us to be slow in speaking the Word of God.

What would this mean? First of all, let us consider what it does not mean?

It doesn't mean that we should avoid boldly proclaiming the gospel to the world. What does **Acts 1:8** tell us? “**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**” What is the stated purpose for the Holy Spirit being given to the church in **Acts 1:8**? The stated purpose in this verse is that we would be witnesses. But let me ask you a question. What kind of witnesses? BOLD OR BASHFUL? Without a doubt we would have to believe that we are to be bold witnesses. And isn't this exactly what we see in the Scriptures?

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I am sure you remember that shortly after the birth of the church that Peter and John were brought before the Jewish authorities to answer the question "where did they get their authority to heal?" Peter responded to their question by saying, beginning in **Acts 4:8** **“Rulers and elders of the people. (9) If we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, (10) Let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-by this name this man stands here before you in good health. (11) He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very cornerstone. (12) And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”** Let me ask you a question. Was Peter bold or bashful? And this was not true of only Peter, but for the vast majority of the church which is clear from **Acts 4:31**.

What does James mean when he tells us in **James 1:19** to be **“slow to speak”**? Based on the clear teachings of the Word of God we cannot conclude that it means that we are to be slow in bearing witness to the gospel of Christ. In fact, if we are not boldly sharing the gospel and seeking even greater opportunity to do so, we are falling short, I believe, of the standard which God has set before us.

“Being slow to speak” also does not mean that we should avoid looking for opportunities to boldly share biblical truth within the church whenever we believe that it would be profitable to do so. What was Paul’s exhortation to Timothy in **2 Tim. 4:1-2**? **“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing in His kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”** We should not be looking for opportunities to avoid speaking truth in love; we should be looking for opportunities to speak the truth in love. In fact, if we are not doing this then, I believe, that we are falling short of the standard that we should be striving to achieve. We see this clear standard presented not only to Timothy here in **2 Tim. 4** , but we see this standard placed before the whole church in **Eph. 4:15**.

If James is not saying that we should avoid being bold in either sharing the gospel with the world or the truth with the church, then what in the world is he saying when he commands us in **V. 19** to be **“slow to speak:”** “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. 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.

I believe that this is supported in **James 3:1**. Let me read this passage for you, **“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.”** What does this imply to us about the readers of this epistle? Apparently, there were certain people among the readers that were seeking to represent themselves as teachers, who unfortunately were not personally prepared, at least from James’s standpoint, to do so. They apparently were either morally or doctrinally messed up and therefore should have purposed to keep a very low profile at least until they prepared themselves morally and biblically to speak.

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What helps us to appreciate the problem that James was addressing more fully is to understand how church meetings were conducted during this time period. Church meetings at this time were much more free wheeling than our present meetings. There apparently was opportunity for people within the congregation to stand up and do whatever they might be led to do. In **1 Cor. 14:20-25** Paul is admonishing the Corinthian congregation for the abuse of the gift of tongues in their church meetings. Immediately following this admonishment Paul goes on to say in **1 Cor. 14:26** **“What is the outcome then, my brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”** Apparently at some time during their church meetings, people had the freedom to get up and teach if they wanted to. I would suspect this was happening in the fellowships that James is addressing in this letter. James apparently felt that these people should not be so quick to be getting up, not because the truth should not be proclaimed and not because the truth should not be proclaimed boldly, but because these people were apparently not in the position to do either.

I am standing before you today and I understand that I am placing myself in a position of jeopardy according to the teaching of **James 3:1**. Why? It is because I am in a very real sense representing myself as a spokesman for God. Having said that, I want to make it very clear that I am not representing myself as a prophet. I have not received this message that I am giving you today directly from God. It was not as if God came to me last night and said "this is what you will say tomorrow." But rather, I believe God has spoken to me through His written Word as I have prayerfully studied it and I am this morning/evening giving you God's message. I am giving you what I believe is God's message for your life. I am standing before you and in essence saying, "Thus sayest the Lord, hear ye him."

But before I do this, I need to heed what message? The message of **James 1:19** which is to be **“slow to speak.”** In an attempt to honor the truth of this passage, I have morally and biblically sought to prepare myself for this morning/evening.

By having morally prepared myself, I am simply saying that I really am trying to live my life pleasing to the Lord and am not aware of any sin in my life that I am unwilling to confess or to forsake.

By having biblically prepared myself I am simply saying that I have studied this passage and attempting to “cut the Word straight” come to a place of conviction concerning the meaning of this passage.

But this care in speaking the Word of God should not only extend to the teachers such as myself, but to all Christians. How do we know this? Look again at **V . 19** **“But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak ....”** James is not addressing those in the church fellowship who were aspiring to be recognized as teachers, but rather of all the brethren. And all of the brethren were being called to be “Slow to speak.” A person I believe serves as a model in this area was Ezra. In **Ezra 7:10** it says, **“... Ezra ... set his heart to ..... teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”** This is not what it says, but rather it says, **“Ezra set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statues and ordinances in Israel.”** Ezra understood the care that needed to be exercised before representing himself as a spokesman for God.

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“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. This not only applies to those who have formal teaching positions in the church but everyone in the church who seeks to speak the truth of God’s Word. If we would do this, then I believe that we are showing a proper respect for the Word and submissiveness to 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 (Ezra 7:10).

### CONCLUSION

If you are a Christian here this morning and say to yourself, "well if this is so then I just want speak at all," you have missed the point of this entire message. We as Christians have been commanded to proclaim the gospel and proclaim it boldly. We as Christians have been commanded to speak the truth in love at every opportunity. We do not have the opportunity or luxury of not speaking truth but neither should we feel the luxury of speaking the truth when we are morally compromised or speaking what we are representing to be truth when we have not personally developed those convictions through a personal examination of the Word.

What is the second test that James gives us in determining whether or not our faith is genuine? Whether or not it is saving? The Response to the Word test. The proper response to the Word first of all requires a proper reception. To properly receive the Word into our hearts so that it becomes implanted, we need to first of practice the command of being “quick to hear” and secondly we need to practice the command of being “slow to speak.” Obedience to both of these commands speak very powerfully to the fact that that a persons’ heart has in fact bowed itself to the supremacy of the Word of God.