

*Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

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

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**.

A proper response to the Word first of all involves 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 seeking to be obedient to the commands of Scriptures and certainly they will be seeking to 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.**”

What is the meaning of each of these three commands? The key to answering this question is recognizing that the immediate context is not talking about our relationship with various people but rather more specifically our relationship with the Word of God. Hopefully you remember that it is the Word of God that we are told in **V. 18** brought us forth and it is that same word “**implanted which is able to save our souls**” in **V. 21**. We therefore need to understand each of these commands in light of our response to the Word of God. What is the meaning of the first command?

“**Quick to hear**” ..... The person who is “quick to hear” will be actively seeking to understand as much of the Scriptures as possible through his own efforts and he will also be putting himself in a position to come under the teaching of others. A person who is “quick to hear” has an appetite for the Word.

“**Slow to speak**” ..... The person who is “slow to speak” will be careful to prepare themselves morally and biblically before speaking. Ezra is a good example of such a person. In **Ezra 7:10** we read, “**For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.**”

This morning we will be considering the third command that we find in **V. 19**. Let us again read this verse, “**This you know my beloved brethren; But let everyone be quick to quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.**” What is the third command? “**slow to anger.**” As we consider this last command I hope that we will have a much greater appreciation of this whole subject of anger, not only as it pertains to us in all situations of life, but even more specifically how it pertains to us in when we are confronted with biblical truth, real or imagined.

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### SLOW TO ANGER

What does James mean when he commands us to be “**slow to anger**”? Does it mean that we should never be angry? And the answer would be, No! It does not say, “Do not be angry.” It says that we are to be “**slow to anger.**” What does this tell us? It tells us that there are times when anger is acceptable and there are times when anger is unacceptable. This is not the only time in the Scriptures where we see this same point.

In **Eph. 4:26** we are actually commanded to “**be angry.**” At this point some of you might be thinking, “Finally, a command that I can obey.” But let us not be so quick about this. The verse goes on to say, “..... **and yet do not sin.**” It is very easy for us to become angry. In fact, becoming angry is the natural outflow of our flesh. It is the natural outflow of our humanness. It is the natural outflow of who we are in Adam when something displeases us. What does **Gal. 5:19-20** tell us? “**Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: “Immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger.....”**

When is anger sin? Anger is sin when it is rooted in our flesh, in our humanness, in what we are in Adam. Let us read **VV. 19-amp;20** , “**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.**” There are two types of anger. There is the anger of man and then there is the anger of God. We can be assured that the anger of man never is able to achieve the righteousness of God. Isn't that what this verse is clearly stating for us? What does it say? “**For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**” It does not say that the anger of man most of the time does not achieve the righteousness of God. No, it says that the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, if we are going to be angry and yet not sin, it must be an expression God's anger and not ours.

I believe this is why James is giving us this command to be slow to anger. We are to be slow to anger because we must be careful as to the source of the anger. Is the anger we are experiencing the anger of man or the anger of God?

What distinguishes God's anger from the anger of man? God's anger is a reaction to the violation of HIS laws and therefore is an expression of His justice. In **Rom. 4:15** Paul said, “**For the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.**” God's anger or God's wrath is a response or reaction to the breaking of His law. And isn't that what we see in the Scriptures in respect to the history of the Jewish nation? The Jewish nation as His covenant people were commanded to imitate God's holiness (**Lev. 11:44**), and when they failed to do so they felt His anger, whether through natural circumstances (**Num. 21:6**) or other nations (**Isa. 10:5**). All violations of the covenant agreement between God and Israel exposed them to God's anger.

Well, you might ask. “If the Jews were the recipients of the law and the covenants and not the Gentiles wouldn't that mean that the Gentiles would somehow escape the anger and wrath of God?” If you believe this then you are terribly wrong.

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I am sure you remember **Rom. 1:18-20**, “**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness , (19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**” Whether we are Jew or Gentile; whether we are the recipients of a law written on tablets of stone or written upon our hearts; if we violate God’s laws, God’s response will be anger. God’s response will be wrath. And even though His anger or wrath may not be immediately exercised in judgment we, should not conclude that His anger will not be exercised at all. The Scriptures are clear that every sinful act will come under judgment.

This is what makes the gospel of Jesus Christ such good news. For when we understand the gospel, we understand that God’s anger, God’s wrath toward us was propitiated or satisfied through Christ’s death on the cross. That is why **1 John 2:2** says, “**And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.**” When Christ died on the cross, His willingness to take upon himself all that was due us, made it possible for any person, no matter how sinful he might be, to be delivered from God’s wrath and therefore any fear of future judgment. All that they have to do is exercise faith in the person and work of Jesus. All they have to do is go through the door which Christ opened.

Well, if God’s anger is HIS reaction to the violation of HIS laws which govern HIS universe and is therefore an expression of HIS justice. Then how should we understand the anger of man? The anger of man is OUR reaction to the violation of OUR laws which govern OUR universe and is therefore an expression of OUR arrogance, or in other words, man’s anger is self-centered.

People get upset when someone cuts them off from a parking space. They get angry when they are passed over for a promotion. They get angry when a teacher gives them a D or F on a report card. They get angry when someone cuts them off in traffic. The attitude that we as people so often times project when we become angry is, “How dare these people do this to me!” Listen very carefully to what I am about to say. “Anger is not an acceptable response to our personal difficulties, no matter how those difficulties might have come.” Why? Because God has not given us permission under His law to respond in that way.

This is certainly true of sinful acts committed against us whether they are real or imagined. When Christ was mocked and reviled at his “trial” did he become angry? The answer is no. When Christ was nailed to the cross did he become angry? No. In fact what did he do? He prayed to the Father and said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Why? Because this was the righteous way for him to respond according to the Law of God. What do the Scriptures call us to do when reviled? We are to bless. What do the Scriptures call us to do when we are persecuted by our enemies? We are called to forgive them and pray for them.

Not only does God not give us permission to respond with anger to those who sin against us, but God also does not give us permission to respond in anger to difficult circumstances. What has God commanded us to do when we encounter various trials? We are to “**count it all joy.**”

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If this is so, then when could we ever righteously express anger? We can righteously express anger when we, as a Spirit-filled Christian, observe an injustice involving God or others that compels us to act in their defense. Certainly we see Christ expressing anger in a righteous way on a number of occasions. Jesus became angry with his disciples when they prevented children from being brought to Him in **Mark 10:14**. He became angry again in the synagogue at Capernaum when certain individuals were more interested in bringing an accusation against Him than in seeing a man with a withered hand healed in **Mark 3:5**. He became angry again in the temple in Jerusalem when He drove the money changers out, saying to them in **Matt. 23:13** **“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robber’s den.’”**

So now with all of this as a background, let us go back to **James 1:19**. James is calling these believers to be slow to anger. There is an anger that is righteous and there is an anger that is unrighteous. Before you respond in anger or I respond in anger, we need to be careful that we are behaving righteously.

Certainly this is true, in every situation that we encounter. But as I have shared with already this passage is not talking about relationships or life in general it is talking more specifically about how we are responding to the Word of God. This is the context.

How are we to respond to the Word of God? We are not only to be quick to hear and slow to speak but we are also to be what? SLOW TO ANGER! Just because a person, like myself gets up and represents myself as a teacher of God’s Word it does not mean that you have to passively sit there and receive everything that I say. In fact, there might be a time when you are listening to a supposed teacher and the proper response to what he says might in fact be “anger.” When might that occur?

This certainly would occur when we believe that the Gospel has been corrupted. In **Gal. 1:8** Paul said, **“But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”** The occasion for this strong statement was the attempt by certain people to add works to the gospel. If I were sitting in a church and heard a teacher say, “You need to be baptized in order to be saved” I would find it very difficult not to have an emotional response to that blasphemy.

When else might we choose to righteously express anger? I believe another occasion is when God’s people are being exploited by the twisting of God’s Word. In **1 Pet. 2:1-3** Peter says, **“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; (3) and in their greed they will exploit you with false words, their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”** If I were sitting in a church and saw the ministers of that church becoming wealthy through the proclamation of the health, wealth, and prosperity doctrine, I would find it very difficult not to have an emotional response to those who are twisting the Word of God and personally profiting from it.

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When else might we chose to righteously express anger? I believe another occasion is when God's people are being given what they want to hear. In **2 Tim. 4:1-3** it says, **“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 and His kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.”** If I were sitting in a church and saw the emphasis on church growth pushing out an emphasis on the teaching of the whole counsel of the Word of God, I would find it very difficult not to have an angry emotional response to that fleshly misdirection on the part of church leaders.

**BUT THE EMPHASIS IS NOT ON BEING ANGRY; IT IS ON BEING SLOW TO ANGER, WHY? IT MAY BE THAT AT THE MOMENT WHEN WE GET FIRED UP WE MAY SEE OURSELVES AS A WARRIOR FOR CHRIST, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT WE MIGHT IN FACT NOT BE REPRESENTING GOD AS MUCH AS WE ARE REPRESENTING OURSELVES. RATHER THAN EXPRESSING THE ANGER OF GOD, WE MIGHT IN FACT, BE EXPRESSING THE ANGER OF MAN.**

I believe that it is very common for people to get upset at what they might hear from faithful biblical teachers. James is saying, don't let your first response be an angry response when you are attending a church that you believe is seeking to faithfully teach the Word. A better response certainly would be what we see the Bereans doing in **Acts 17:11**, which was objectively examining the Word to see if what was being shared was in fact the truth. If you still feel that the teacher has misinterpreted the Scripture, then go to him and discuss it. If you still don't get satisfaction and it does not involve the gospel, then simply pray for him as well as yourself as you together continue your search for truth.

### CONCLUSION

How are we to receive the Word? We are to be quick to hear (We are to have an appetite for the Scriptures). We are to be slow to speak (We are to be morally and biblically prepared before we represent ourselves as a spokesman for God.) And we are to be “slow to anger.” Before we find ourselves choosing to become angry at faithful teachers, we need to examine ourselves to see whether or not the origin of our anger is our own flesh rather than the indwelling Spirit.