

*Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

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

The theme of James is “Tests of Living Faith!” This epistle was written so that we might know whether we are saved or not saved. The first test that we find in this epistle is the “The Response to Trials test.” This 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 proper response to the Word first of all involves a “proper reception” which is described for us in **VV. 19-21**. But a proper response not only involves a proper reception but also AN ACTIVE OBEDIENCE which we see in **VV. 22-27**.

Let us read **VV. 22-27** “**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.**” How can we know if in fact we have received the Word in such a way that it has become implanted? We will know when we see ourselves practicing active obedience. It is not enough for us to simply think that we have received the Word properly; we must see the fruit of it in our lives. As we have begun to explore this area of active obedience to the Word, we began two weeks ago by considering the demand for it in **VV. 22-25**.

The demand for active obedience is succinctly stated in **James 1:22** .... “**But prove yourselves doers of the Word and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**” James then builds on this in **VV. 23-25** by giving us two different portrayals. The first portrayal is the negative portrayal of the “hearer” in **VV. 23-amp;24**, “**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.**” We learned from this portrayal that there are professing Christians who clearly see themselves in the mirror of God’s Word but like the man in **VV. 23-amp;24**, after they see their reflection, they go away and the image that they saw quickly fades from their memory and has no lasting impact on their life. These people are not characterized by active obedience.

James then follows up this negative portrayal of the “hearer” with the positive portrayal of the “doer” in **V. 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.**” Here we see a professing believer who examines his life very carefully in light of the Scriptures more intently than the man described in **VV. 23-24**. He most likely does this because he has a more elevated view of the Scriptures.

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He sees them as God's "**perfect law**" or in other words as God's perfect authority. And in addition to this, he sees the Scriptures as the "**law of liberty.**" He sees the Scriptures as the means by which he can escape the cruel master of sin while at the same time being able to place himself under the benevolent rule of Christ and His law. Because of these beliefs and his subsequent very careful examination of the Word of God, he will not be forgetful of what he saw in the Scriptures but rather he will abide by it. He will be characterized by active obedience. And of course this will lead to a blessed life.

James is now in **VV. 26-amp;27** going to give his readers three different areas that he wants them to be particularly aware of when examining this whole area of active obedience. He gives them three different areas that I believe that he himself was concerned about in respect to their own personal practices. **(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."**

I am hopeful that as we begin to examine these areas of concern, you yourself might be personally challenged in respect to very specific areas of righteousness.

### PRESSING AREAS OF CONCERN

THE FIRST AREA OF CONCERN IS THE AREA OF SPEECH. This certainly was an area of concern that James had for his own readers. Let us read **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."** There are many references to speech in this letter, giving the impression that the tongue was a serious problem in the assembly.

James 1:19 "This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger...."

James 2:12 "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty."

James 3:1-12 "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. (2) For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. (3) Now if we put the bits into the horses mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. (5) So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! (6) And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (7) For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race.

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(8) But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. (9) With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. (10) From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. (11) Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? (12) Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh.”

James 4:11-12 “Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. (12) There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?”

Undoubtedly there was a problem with the tongue among the readers that was being addressed by James. And James wants them to examine their conduct in this area in order for them to see whether or not they see themselves as doers of the Word.

Let us begin by looking at the very first phrase, **“If anyone thinks himself to be religious.....”** The word “religious” (THRESKOS) refers to external religious rituals, liturgies, routines, and ceremonies. The famous Jewish historian Josephus used the word to describe worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Paul used the noun form of this term when speaking of his former life as a zealous Pharisee in Acts 26:5. By contrast, the word most commonly used in the New Testament for genuine, God-honoring and God-pleasing worship is EUSEBEIA, whose basic meaning is that of godliness and holiness.

Such things as attending church services and activities, ministering within the church, or even having right theology has no spiritual value in and of themselves. There must be a spiritual rebirth which results in significant changes within our lives as God works through His word to purify us. Certainly one area that we all need to examine is the area of our speech. I am not saying to you that in order for our salvation to be confirmed we have to have perfect speech. But as a disciple of Christ we need to be striving for perfection. The Bible tells us that we are to be holy even as the Lord is holy. One area that we must be striving to be holy in is the area of our speech and if we are not personally seeing growth in this area, we are in trouble. This is not my opinion this is what James is saying. Look at the rest of the verse. **“If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue** (Does not see an ever increasing influence of the Word of God on his speech patterns). **“..... but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.”**

The tongue is not the only indicator of true spirituality but is one of the most reliable. It has been estimated that the average person will speak some 18,000 words in a day, enough for a fifty-four page book. In a year, that amounts to sixty-six 800-page volumes! Many people, of course, speak much more than that. Up to one-fifth of the average person’s life is spent speaking.

If the tongue is not controlled by God, it is a sure indicator that the heart is not, either. Jesus told the self-righteous Pharisees in **Matt. 12:34-37..... “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”** RELIGION THAT DOES NOT TRANSFORM THE HEART, AND THEREBY THE TONGUE, IS TOTALLY WORTHLESS IN GOD’S SIGHT.

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I would like to move through some of the areas of our speech that we need to look at when evaluating this area of “**bridling our tongue.**” And in going through each of these areas make a few comments concerning that area, to at least begin to stimulate your thinking concerning the positive examination of your speech.

### AREAS OF SPEECH THAT NEED TO BE ABANDONED

**BLASPHEMOUS SPEECH** - Blasphemous speech involves an intentional and defiant dishonoring of the nature, name, or work of God by word or action. The Scriptures are full of examples of blasphemous behavior. For us there are a number of different ways this can be done, but let me share with you just a few involving our speech. When we use the name of the Lord frivolously, we would be guilty of blasphemous speech. This is specifically called out in the 10 commandments in **Ex. 20:7** when it says, “**You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.**” Certainly if you are here this morning and you consider yourself a Christian but as a matter of habit might continue to use the expression such as “God damn.” You are guilty of blasphemous speech. This has no place in the vocabulary of a truly born-again believer. Let me take this a step further. If you are here this morning and are a professing believer but have felt the freedom to sprinkle your conversation with the name of “Jesus” that is blasphemous. You do not have the freedom to turn to someone that has done something you believe is stupid and say to him, “Jesus, can’t you do this right.” This is just the tip of the iceberg, it is your responsibility as a doer of the Word to continue to examine your life in light of this truth. Our lips our not to in any way dishonor or demean our Lord.

**FILTHY SPEECH** - Filthy speech is everything inconsistent with the modesty of a saint. Filthy words and filthy deeds bring dishonor and shame. Let us read **Eph. 5:4** “**And there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.**” I don’t believe I have to give you a grocery list of words this morning that would fall in this category of “filth.” But I do want to exhort you to strive to draw the line of what is acceptable to you in your speech far back from where the world is. This means that you need to, I believe, strive to eliminate any word that is even debatable in the eyes of men. It is a very sad thing to see people who have been so-called professing believers any length of time who continue to give themselves permission to express themselves with the gutter language of the world.

You might note that Paul in **Eph. 5:4** makes it clear that this involves silly talk and coarse jesting. Paul certainly would include in this category what we today call the “dirty joke” or “off color stories.” I know that we may think off color may not be off-color to another person, but we need to exercise great care.

I was on a trip with a group of pastors once and one of the pastors shared several different stories that were clearly full of sexual innuendo. I don’t care how funny we might think a particular story might be, if it involves the demeaning of the purity and sacredness of the sexual relationship between a husband and wife, it is totally unacceptable. To me, his attempt at humor was outside the limit of what was acceptable.

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I felt so strongly about this that when we were alone I read **Eph. 5:4** to him and told him that it was my opinion that his communication with us the day before fell into the category of silly talk and coarse jesting.

I want you to know that I would not make this a practice with the unsaved, but we do have a responsibility in regards to fellow believers to give them the benefit of our perspectives so that they might consider what the Lord would have them to do.

NOW SOME OF YOU AT THIS POINT MIGHT BE SAYING, “NO PROBLEM. I HAVE NEVER BEEN INVOLVED IN BLASPHEMOUS OR FILTHY SPEECH.” BUT LET US NOT BECOME TOO SMUG.

LYING SPEECH - Lying speech is any speech that is consciously attempting to mislead or deceive another. The Scriptures are clear, in **Eph. 4:25** it tells us “**Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you with his neighbor.**” There is no middle ground; there are no “white lies.” Anything but the truth is sin.

I know that this is not commonly held. I know that the vast majority of our society believes that sometimes it is very appropriate to lie when it involves in some way the protection of another. We have recently seen this opinion expressed in regards to our president. As you know our president has acknowledged that he had an inappropriate relationship with a woman other than his wife. But before this acknowledgment, he had led courts and the American people to believe something else. How has deception been justified? It has been justified by saying that it was done in order to protect his family.

I hope that you understand that I am not in any way attempting by this remark to condemn or to excuse our president. I am only taking the opportunity that has publicly presented itself, which you are all aware of to make the clear point. The point is very simple: lying is never acceptable under any circumstances. And if we are seeking to bridle our tongue then this must be the standard that we are seeking to live by.

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### CONCLUSION

JAMES IS GIVING US TESTS OF LIVING FAITH. THE FIRST TEST HE GAVE US WAS THE “RESPONSE TO TRIALS TEST.” THE SECOND THAT HE IS PRESENTLY GIVING US IS THE “RESPONSE TO THE WORD TEST”. THIS INVOLVES NOT ONLY A PROPER RECEPTION BUT ALSO A PROPER RESPONSE, WHICH IS CHARACTERIZED BY AN ACTIVE OBEDIENCE. THOSE WHO ARE CHARACTERIZED BY ACTIVE OBEDIENCE ARE DESCRIBED AS DOERS OF THE WORD. DOERS OF THE WORD WILL MANIFEST OVER TIME MANIFEST A GROWING MATURITY IN THE WAY THEY SPEAK. THIS FIRST INVOLVES THE PUTTING OFF OF CERTAIN SPEECH PATTERNS.

BLASPHEMOUS SPEECH

FILTHY SPEECH

LYING SPEECH

ANGRY SPEECH

COMPLAINING SPEECH

DEFILING SPEECH

BOASTFUL SPEECH

FLATTERING SPEECH

THOUGHTLESS SPEECH (SELF-SERVING RATHER THAN SERVING)