

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Stop Kidding Yourself

James 1:19-27

Part Eight

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**. And now we are considering illustrations of it in **VV. 26-27**. James is seeking to bring the necessity of active obedience alive for his readers. He does this by pointing out to them three areas of particular concern to him personally.

The very first area of concern that James addresses is the area of their speech. What does James tell his readers in respect to their speech? “**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.**” RELIGION THAT DOES NOT TRANSFORM THE HEART, AND THEREBY THE TONGUE, IS TOTALLY WORTHLESS IN GOD’S SIGHT.

If we are going to make a claim to possessing a living faith, then we must respond to the Word of God properly and this means that we will be characterized by active obedience and certainly this would mean that we would be actively seeking to “**bridle our tongue.**” I don’t think there is any doubt that the bridling of our tongue would involve the abandonment of certain speech patterns. Last week we began to isolate for you some of those speech patterns that need to be abandoned.

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Blasphemous speech - Blasphemous speech involves an intentional and defiant dishonoring of the nature, name, or work of God by word or action. Last week we gave you certain examples of how this might be done even by professing believers. In addition to this area of speech, another area of speech that we mentioned last week that needs to be abandoned is filthy speech.

Filthy speech - Filthy speech is anything inconsistent with the modesty of a saint. Again like we did with blasphemous speech, we gave to you last week certain examples of how this might be done by professing believers. The very last area that we addressed last week was lying speech.

Lying speech - Lying speech is any speech that is consciously attempting to mislead or deceive another. We talked about this at length last week giving examples of how professing believers might fall into this snare.

This weekend we will continue to explore other areas of speech that we need to be bridling. We will be looking at other areas of speech that we need to be abandoning.

AREAS OF SPEECH TO BE ABANDONED

WE NEED TO PUT AWAY COMPLAINING SPEECH. Complaining speech is any speech that expresses a spirit of discontent with the way things are. **Phil. 2:14** says very succinctly, **“Do all things without grumbling and complaining.”** It is very difficult when thinking about the sin of grumbling and complaining to not think about Israel. In **1 Cor. 10:9-amp;10** Paul, in summarizing the history of Israel, gave this warning to the Corinthians: **“(9) Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. (10) Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.**

What specific instances of grumbling and complaining by the Israelites do we see in the OT? Certainly the experience recorded in **Num. 21** comes to mind, where, after God had graciously provided water out of the rock and manna from heaven to sustain His people, we read in **Num. 21:5** these words **“And the people spoke against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.”** Both of these complaints were lies; the Lord had given them water out of the rock and bread from heaven to sustain them, but they described these provisions from God’s hand as **“miserable food.”**

Did the Lord view their grumbling and complaining lightly? Obviously not, for in the very next verse we read, **“And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.”**

What was the proper response of the nation of Israel to the provision of water from the rock or the provision of manna from heaven? Thanksgiving! And you are sitting here this weekend saying to yourself, “If I was an Israelite and if the Lord had provided me with water, and if the Lord had provided me with manna, as he did the Israelites, I sure would not have been one of those who were grumbling and complaining. I certainly would not have been one of those who would have expressed by my words a spirit of discontent.” Is that so? Let us test that for a moment.

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Let me ask you a question, “What has the Lord provided you?” All that you have has been given to you by the Lord. Is this not true? What therefore should characterize our lives in respect to whatever has been brought to us? It is a spirit of gratitude. If we are not responding in this way, but rather find ourselves responding with words that could be interpreted as grumbling and complaining, we are not any different than the nation of Israel. Why? Because everything that we have has been given to us by the Lord.

Do you have a job? Then what should our attitude be toward that job? It should be characterized by a spirit of gratitude. Even if you have not had a raise in 10 years? Yes! Even if your employer expects you to be on call 24 hours a day? Yes! I am not saying that it is wrong to want a better job; but this does not mean that we cannot be grateful for what we have and it certainly does not mean that we have to grumble and complain about the job that we are in.

But someone here might say, “But I don’t have a job and I need one desperately. How could the Lord expect me not to complain?” He expects you, by faith, to understand that even in this situation that according to **Rom. 8:28** God is working it together for good. We are therefore, even if we are unemployed, expected to give thanks in our unemployment, trusting that God is doing a good work. And certainly what we cannot do is to grumble and complain. This does not mean that you should not desire to find a job; it does not mean that you should not be diligently looking for a job. It just means that we are by faith to see God’s bigger picture.

Some of you are presently in school and you may have teachers that you personally find very difficult for one reason or the other. I know that it may be very difficult not to grumble and complain about them, but I am challenging you on the basis of God’s word not to do this. We should not be going around whining and complaining about this teacher or that teacher. This is what we would expect those who do not possess a living faith to do but this should not be a part of our speech. If the teacher’s lectures are difficult to understand, rather than grumbling and complaining, attempt to clarify what has been said either in class by asking questions or after class by taking time to get extra help from the teacher or someone else. But let us not complain.

Bridling our tongues, I believe, involves putting off certain kinds of speech. Certainly it involves blasphemous speech, it involves filthy speech, it involves lying speech and it also involves complaining speech. Now we will move on another area of speech that needs to be eliminated and that is **BOASTFUL SPEECH**.

BOASTFUL SPEECH - Boastful speech is any speech that robs God of what is due Him in respect to glory, honor and praise. Listen to the words of Jeremiah in **Jer. 9:23-24** “**Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; (24) But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.**” When we speak we need to be concerned that the praise and honor of men not be directed at us but rather to the Lord.

Certainly I am sure that you are familiar with the story of Nebuchadnezzar in **Dan. 4:28-37** “**(28) All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. (29) Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.**”

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(30) The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ Where is Nebuchadnezzar directing his praise? Clearly it was to himself. He is guilty of boasting because he had robbed God of the glory, honor and praise that was due Him and Him alone. And we discover that God is not very happy with him. **“(31) While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, (32) and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ (33) Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. (34) But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most high and praised and honored Him who lives forever; “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. (35) And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, What has thou done?””** Then in V. 37 he says, **“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”**

You may be saying to yourself, “Boy, that guy had a problem! It was a good thing that God straightened him out.” But we need to be careful. I know that this example is a blatant example of the problem, but this problem of a boastful spirit that expresses itself in boastful speech certainly can involve things much more mundane. Consider **James 4:13-16**, **“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” (14) Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. (15) Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” (16) But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”** This merchant was taking far too much credit for whatever successes he may have had in the past and expressed far too much confidence in his ability to make it happen in the future.

As I am sharing these thoughts with you from these various passages of Scripture, it might be quite disconcerting for some of you. You might be asking yourself, “How can I make sure that I am not guilty of such arrogance, of such evil?” You might even, as I was sharing this story, be thinking back to perhaps an instance just recently when you may have said to someone, “We are planning to go to my folks for Christmas and on the way back stop at my sister’s house.” And you may be now reflecting on that conversation and trying to remember whether or not you said, “Lord willing.” Or someone here might be reflecting back on a conversation this past week with a friend and you shared with them how your son seems to have a real gift for math and you are wondering if in that comment you should have said, “The Lord has blessed my son with a real gift for math.” These are good things for you and I to be reflecting on because it is very important that our speech not become boastful. But I believe that we can have a real problem at this point, if we are not careful.

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Sometimes someone comes out of the service and says to me, “Dale, that was a great message!” Now, how should I respond to this? First of all I want you to know that there is no set response that is the right response. But I could say something like, “All the praise goes to God.” I could do this in order to make sure that the person knows that if anything good happens during our services God is the one ultimately responsible. But I am somewhat uncomfortable with that response because it may be communicating to the person who made the statement that I believe that he does not know this. Certainly this is not what I want to do. Therefore I have concluded that when someone makes an encouraging statement to me perhaps believing that this is exactly what the Lord would have them to do about something, I may have done or been a part of that I would respond with a simple “thank you.” Have I in that response become guilty of boasting by somehow robbing God of what is rightfully due Him? I hope not! I would hope if you were able to be around me for any length of time at all, you would know that I hope that every word or action would honor the Lord, whom I serve. But in this case, I believe I am not dishonoring the Lord by not saying, “All the praise goes to God.” But rather, I believe I am honoring God by doing what I believe He would have me to do by expressing a simple, “thank you” to a person I believe wanted to be encouraging.

In addressing the problem of “boasting”, the best place to start is not by looking at specific words but rather at our own heart. The issue is not so much if we have said exactly the right words in this situation or in that situation but rather, as we look at ourselves or if someone else look’s at our life, can it be unequivocally demonstrated that we are living to bring glory to God and Him alone. Do we know, and is it obvious to others, that it would be a grievous thing for us to think that we have in some way robbed God of what is rightfully His.

What is our heart’s desire? Is our hearts desire to see the Lord alone exalted? Is our hearts desire is for the Lord to receive all the glory and honor and praise? If it is, we will see this reflected in our speech. What does the Scripture teach us? **Mt. 12:34** tells us, **“that out of the heart the mouth speaketh.”** If we somehow in our hearts have not come to the place where we desire no glory, honor or praise for ourselves, any attempt at not being boastful will fail. Oh, it may be that we can begin to pepper our conversations with such phrases as “Lord willing this and Lord willing that.” Or we might after each statement of some accomplishment say, “praise be to the Lord.” But even this will become for us a source of pride, if we do not have our hearts right before the Lord.

Who are you seeking to exalt? Who are you seeking to honor? Who are you seeking to glorify? If the answer to this question is the Lord, can you see this demonstrated not only by what you say but by what you don’t say? If not, then it is very likely your speech is not fashioned to ultimately glorify God, but rather yourself.

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CONCLUSION

What areas of speech have we looked at that needs to be abandoned? Blasphemous speech, filthy speech, lying speech, complaining speech, and boastful speech. If you have seen yourself in what we have considered this weekend, I would hope that you would not for this moment say to yourself that is me, then leave and do nothing about it. But rather, you will have this emblazoned on your mind and your heart in such a way that you would abide by what you have seen.