

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Stop Kidding Yourself James 1:19-27 Part Nine

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 these speech patterns 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.

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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. And again like we did with blasphemous speech we gave to you last week certain examples of how this might be done by professing believers. Another 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 how professing believers might fall into this snare.

Complaining speech - Complaining speech is any speech that expresses a spirit of discontent with the way things are.

Boastful speech - Boastful speech is any speech that robs God of what is due him in respect to glory, honor and praise.

This weekend we will finish the areas of speech that need to be abandoned as we continually seek before the Lord to bridle our tongue.

AREAS OF SPEECH TO BE ABANDONED

Angry speech - Angry speech is any emotionally driven communication which originates from the flesh that impels us to hurt or destroy that which angers us. Of course it is obvious that angry speech comes from an angry heart. If we are angry in our spirit, there is no way that it will not in some way express itself in our speech. Look at **Matt. 12:34** **“Out of the heart the mouth speaketh.”** Then, consider **Matt. 5:21-22** **“You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not commit murder” and “Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.” (22) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, “You fool” shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”** Notice how Jesus moves from the sin of anger to angry speech. Angry speech is the natural outflow of an angry heart.

How serious is angry speech? Some people discount the angry things they might say by telling us that, “this is the way they were raised.” Or they may say, “Yes, I may have been angry but it could have been far worse than it was.” But what does Jesus say? **“..... whoever shall say to his brother , “Raca” shall be guilty before the supreme court.”** What does “Raca” mean? “Raca” is an Aramaic word, most probably signifying ‘empty’ as if one should call another ‘empty head’. It would be us calling someone out of anger a “blockhead.” The word **“fool”** is a Greek word meaning “dull, stupid” and is a fair equivalent of “Raca.”

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And what does Jesus tell us is the just consequence for such angry outbursts? “... **whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, “You fool” shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**” In essence what Jesus is saying is this, ‘Anger, the kind that leads to bitter words - is in its very nature murder. We need to be careful that we do not take any communication that is characterized by anger lightly. Just as we should not take the sin of murder lightly for it has serious consequences.

Even as I am sharing these things with you about the seriousness of the sin of anger and more specifically the seriousness of anger when it infiltrates our communication, I know there may be people here that will not admit to being angry even though they are guilty.

Why is this? Because the Scriptures teach us that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. When I first got married and Lynn would confront me and say to me, “Dale, you’re angry.” I would often times respond, “I am not angry; I am just intense.” Sometimes we don’t want to see it. So just in case there are people here this morning who may be struggling with this, I would like to share with you a few different ways that angry speech can surface.

Loud speech - Do you raise your voice? If you do, you might say to yourself or to others that you are just simply excited, but the truth might be that in fact you are angry and this is the expression of that. Consider your home and consider your speech. Do you raise your voice when you are speaking to or at others? If you do, then I would challenge you before the Lord not to allow this to be a part of your speech pattern any longer.

Belittling speech or derogatory speech - Calling someone “stupid” or “bonehead” would certainly be derogatory speech. You might say that these words are just a part of your ordinary vocabulary and there is absolutely no anger associated with it or you might say that you were only jesting. But, on the other hand, the truth might be that anger is very much a part of it. Consider your home and consider your speech. Are you prone to use “words” or “expressions” that could be considered derogatory or belittling? If you are, whether you believe that you are angry or not, I challenge you before the Lord not to allow this to be a part of your speech pattern any longer.

Character assassination - Telling people that they are selfish, bitter, angry, thoughtless, cruel, unforgiving etc. etc. etc. can be a way for us to give expression to anger. You may be thinking that you are trying to help solve some personal issue between yourself and them, but the truth might very well be that you are just getting some things off your chest in a fit of anger. Just a suggestion: if you believe that your spouse has been acting particularly selfish, for instance, hopefully, you would not say to them, “Boy, you’re selfish” rather you might say, “I have been feeling very unimportant to you lately.” Rather than saying, “You are a bitter person.” It might be better for you to say, “I am feeling very frustrated and feel totally unable to please you.” Rather than saying, “You are an unforgiving person” perhaps it would be better to say, “I feel that I have somehow disappointed you.”

Angry speech can express itself in a number of different ways. I have this morning given you only three of those areas. Certainly there are other areas.

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In fact I have purposely left out gossip and slander, which I believe need to be given special attention, which we will do when we get to **James 3**. But for right now we need to be focusing on the fact that if we truly desire to “**bridle our tongues**”, we need to be committed to abandoning certain speech patterns, and that would certainly include areas such as blasphemous speech, filthy speech, lying speech, complaining speech, boastful speech, and now angry speech. Finally, in these areas of speech that need to be abandoned I have come to probably the most difficult of all..... **CARELESS SPEECH**.

Careless speech - Careless speech is any speech that does not produce any good result. In **Matt. 12:22** a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb was brought to Jesus for healing, and Christ in fact healed him. The multitudes responded by wondering if perhaps Jesus was in fact the promised Jewish Messiah. The Pharisees stepped in and quickly responded by accusing Jesus of performing this miracle and other miracles that he had performed in the power of **Beelzebub, the ruler of demons** in **V. 24**.

Responding to the charge that he is casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, Jesus points out that their charge was **ABSURD** in **VV. 25-26**. Jesus points out that their charge was **INCONSISTENT** in **V. 27**. Jesus points out that their charge was **OBSCURING** in **VV. 28-30**. Jesus points out that their charge was **UNPARDONABLE** in **VV. 31-32**. And finally in **VV. 33-37** Jesus points out that their charge was **EXPOSING**. Their words which they used to make their charge against Christ exposed their heart. The words that they used exposed their heart as evil and wicked. And in the midst of this section of Scripture we read these words in **V. 36** “**And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.**”

What does Jesus mean by “careless words.” Certainly from the context it would involve “blasphemous words.” For it was the Pharisee’s accusation that led to this statement by Christ. But I believe that it includes far more than this. The word “careless” (ARGON) lit. means “no work.” The KJV translates the word “Idle” which is an excellent translation. With this in mind, we would have to conclude that not only blasphemous words, but any word that is spoken with no good purpose in mind should be considered “careless.”

We have often heard the expression, “think before you speak.” This is a wonderful encouragement. If we would do this, we would be forced to consider the impact of our words and whether that impact would be truly good.

In reflecting upon this concept in respect to my own life, I have been thinking about various things that I say. For instance when I come through the door of my house and greet my wife or my children with a “Hello.” Is that word working good? And the answer would have to be yes. Of course, people in general are ministered to in a positive way when they are acknowledged. If after I have acknowledged my family would it be a profitable thing to ask how their day went? Of course! These words can communicate to those within our homes that we are interested in them and their lives. Some things are very obvious and therefore we do not have to give them much thought, but at other times things are not nearly so obvious.

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For instance, let us say that you and your wife has just had a disagreement and in the midst of that disagreement your wife has done or said something that hurt you. It might be that you think that it is obvious that you need to say something. But what will you say? What words will most likely produce a “good work”? Effort needs to be expended before we speak. It might be that in the situation that I have just shared with you that it would be very prudent to have the Spirit of God search our own heart for your own transgression before approaching your wife or husband. Coming to our spouse with our own shortcomings and with a recognition of our own failures certainly can many times provide an environment which would make her or him much more understanding of any hurt that you might have felt. God give us grace to weigh our words.

I would like to make a confession of an area of speech that I not long ago became convicted of that fell into this area of “careless speech.” There were times in the past when Lynn might ask me to do something such as stop by the store and get something for her.” I would do this. But when I would get home and she might ask, “Did you remember to get the milk.” I might respond, “I’m sorry, I forgot.” This of course would fall in the category of teasing. Was it profitable? Of course not! It is designed to get a rise out of the other person and the problem with this is that the rise you get might not always be profitable. This is an area of speech that I have now purposed to abandon because it believe that it falls in the category of “CARELESS.”

CONCLUSION

There are many different areas of speech that need to be abandoned. Certainly among those areas of speech would be BLASPHEMOUS SPEECH, FILTHY SPEECH, LYING SPEECH, COMPLAINING SPEECH, BOASTFUL SPEECH, ANGRY SPEECH AND BEYOND THIS CARELESS which is any speech that does not achieve a good work in the person or persons that hear you.

Why is it so important that we work at bridling our tongue in respect to these areas? Because it says a whole lot about ourselves. What does **James 1:26** “**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.**”

This does not mean that we have to have perfect speech, but it does mean that we need to be continually striving for perfect speech and by God’s grace seeing progress.