

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Stop Kidding Yourself**

**James 1:19-27**

**Part 13**

The theme of James is “Tests of Living Faith!” This epistle was written so that we might know whether or not we are 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 which is “The Response to the Word test” in **James 1:19-27**. A proper response to the word involves a “Proper reception” in **VV. 19-21** and a life characterized by “active obedience” in **VV. 22-27**.

As we have explored this area of “active obedience” we have looked at the “demand for it” in **VV.22-25** and we are now looking at specific “illustrations of it” in **VV. 26-27**. The very first area that we have looked at is the speech area. Let us 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.”** One area that active obedience must be manifested is in the area of our speech; the way we talk, the way we communicate. But if we find ourselves being unchanged by the Word in this particular area, we are in trouble. A religion that does not transform the heart, and thereby the tongue, James tells us, is totally worthless in the sight of God.

What does it mean practically for us to bridle our tongue? Certainly it would involve putting off certain speech patterns while putting on others. Over the past several weeks we have considered certain areas of speech that need to be put off or abandoned. The areas of speech that we mentioned were blasphemous speech, filthy speech, lying speech, complaining speech, boastful speech, angry speech and careless speech. After considering these particular areas of speech, we have now begun to consider areas of speech that need to be put on.

To help us in this area, I have been using an ACRONYM A.C.T.S. As we have considered each letter of this ACRONYM I have made an application to our speech as it applies to God and then I have made a similar application as it relates to man. We began with the letter A.

#### The letter “A”

As it applies to God, the first area of speech that needs to be added is ADORATION. Adoring speech is the outflow of our redeemed spirit contemplating God’s holy perfections addressed to him in prayer (Ps.100).

As it applies to man the first area of speech that needs to be added is APPRECIATION. Appreciative speech is any speech that communicates to people that we value them for who they are (1 Pet. 2:17). We then went to the letter C.

#### The Letter “C”

As it applies to God, the second area of speech that needs to be added that begins with the letter “C” is CONFESSION. Confessing speech is any speech directed to God that acknowledges our sin and agrees with Him concerning it.

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As it applies to man, the second area of speech that needs to be added that begins with the letter “C” is conciliatory speech. Conciliatory speech is any speech directed to man that seeks to overcome hostility.

We first of all looked at how we should bridle our tongue when directly confronted with hostility, when someone comes to us and makes it very clear to us that they are angry with us.

This morning I would like to now consider how we should bridle our tongue when we come to realize someone is hostile with us indirectly. Or in other words we come to have reason to believe that someone may in fact be angry with us but for whatever reason has chosen not to confront us.

### When Hostility Toward Us Is Indirect

To help us with this question of how we should respond when someone is angry with us but has not come to us personally, I would like to consider **Mt. 5:23-24**, **“If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”** In this passage Jesus is instructing us on how to respond when something, such as a worship experience, causes us to remember that we in fact have a broken relationship. This person who we may think is angry with us is not at that moment in time accusing us or confronting us. In fact, he may never have personally accused us or confronted us. The verse just simply says **“If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you.”** It does not say that you have this information directly or indirectly. It simply states when you come to this awareness you must go. When we become aware that someone may be angry with us, we must go quickly. We must see the urgency of living at peace with all men.

If we go and the person denies harboring any ill will or animosity toward us then praise the Lord. Even if they are not being truthful with us we have at least done what the scriptures have called us to do and now it is between that person and the Lord whether they are in fact truly reconciled with us. But if we go and the person does in fact admit to harboring anger toward us and manifests a clear hostility toward us, then we need to once again commit ourselves to doing exactly what I have shared with you last week in terms of bridling our tongue.

We need to purpose not to retaliate. If we are insulted we cannot give an insult. This is the clear teaching of **1 Pet. 3:9**. Just because we are verbally abused does not give us the right to become verbally abusive.

We need to purpose to hear. We need to purpose to hear the offense they have against us and the basis of their accusation. This is based on **Prov. 18:13**, **“He who gives an answer before he hears it is folly and shame to him.”**

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If the accusation is proven by them to have a basis in fact, hopefully we would be able to see that as being so. If we in fact see our guilt, then it would be very appropriate for us to ask for forgiveness. Again, even in asking forgiveness we need to be careful with our words, we need to bridle our tongue. A suggested outline that I have seen several times suggests the following approach:

Acknowledge that you have sinned. You can say, “I have sinned” or you could say you were wrong or you could say that “God has convinced me that I was wrong.” In speaking in this way, you are acknowledging guilt and if the person is angry with you, this helps.

Identify the specific sin by its biblical name. “What I did was selfish” or “What I did was dishonest.”

Identify an alternative biblical behavior to demonstrate repentance. “I should have clarified what you meant before I jumped to that hasty conclusion”.

Ask for forgiveness: “Will you forgive me?”

This is all very well and good, but what happens if after we go and listen to their accusation against us and the basis of their accusation we are unable to find any fault in ourselves. Then what are we to do?

We need to understand that third instruction that I shared with you last week from **1 Pet. 3:9**. We are to **“give a blessing.”** We need to respond by speaking well to them.

Acknowledge that you have taken their accusation seriously; that you have sought to listen to it and the basis for it and have sought to examine your life in light of what has been shared.

Express to them the value that you place on a good relationship with them and your need to be forgiven by them even though at this time you have been unable to see your guilt.

Formerly ask for their forgiveness.

Then, if appropriate, ask them if they would pray with you. If they agree, then you can pray for yourself that God would continue to reveal the sin in your life that is hidden and unknown. And finish by praying for God’s blessing upon the life of the one who you have just approached for the purpose of reconciliation.

In considering our acronym A.C.T.S., we have now completed the first two letters. This brings us to the third letter, the letter “T”. And of course, what else could this stand for other than “thanksgiving?” Thankful speech is any speech directed to God or man that expresses gratitude for something good they have done, are doing or will do. Let us first of all consider thanksgiving as it applies to the Lord. And what could be more appropriate for us this weekend than to consider this particular area of our speech?

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I would like us to read **1 Thess. 5:18**, **“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”** When we are considering the bridling of our tongue, certainly one area this bridling should manifest itself is in the area of thanksgiving. But not just thanksgiving, but thanksgiving in all things. **HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THIS PRACTICE OF GIVING THANKS TO GOD IN EVERYTHING?**

We need to understand that the practice of giving thanks to God for the good things that come into our lives as well as the bad is at the very core of Christian living. A person who is devoid of this practice would be at least in his behavior more closely identified with the world than with the church of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:18-21).

In **Romans 1:18-21** Paul said the following: **“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. (21) For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”** Unsaved people for the most part know God through conscience and creation but they do not honor him as God “nor” what? GIVE THANKS.

But this is not true of saved people for the most part. Those who are saved should be characterized by thanksgiving. They are characterized by the continual giving of thanks to God. Notice how the giving of thanks to God is just assumed in the following passages.

In **1 Cor. 14:16** Paul is giving instructions to the church concerning spiritual gifts and in the midst of these instructions he talks about the need for the church, when the gift of tongues is being exercised, to exercise the gift in a certain way, lest the verse says, **“Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? (17) For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.”** What does Paul assume to be present when Christians were gathering? Thanks to God!!

Then in **2 Cor. 4:15** Paul is talking about the increasing numbers of people who are coming to faith in Christ and the resultant fruit of those decisions. What does the verse say? **“For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”** What does Paul assume people will be doing as they come to faith in Christ? He assumes that they will be expressing thanks to God. What is particularly interesting about this expression of thanksgiving is that it is being done by Christians, according to the context, who are suffering greatly.

Why is the practice of thanksgiving to God or the lack of it significant? Because it can tell us a lot about ourselves and our relationship to God. **WHAT EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENCE?**

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The difference between the world and the church in the area of thanksgiving is explained by the fact that Christians do not view things in life as being orchestrated by chance or by some impersonal force or by human effort but rather by a sovereign God who works everything after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:13).

The verse that best expresses our way of thinking is **Romans 8:28** “**For God works all things together for good to those who are called according to His purpose.**” If we believe that God is sovereignly working, blending every contingency of life to lead to a sovereignly determined goal that ultimately serves our best interest, then we can handle anything. In fact we can therefore what? Give thanks in everything.

When we give thanks in everything we are not saying everything is good but we are saying BY FAITH THAT GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD (Rom. 8:28).

Certainly I hope that we see that the will of God for us in Christ Jesus is to give thanks to God in all things, whether those things are good or bad. We can intellectually acquiesce to this as reasonable because the Bible tells us that God is working those things together for good in our lives. But though this may be true, we are very weak, and the ability to be obedient to this command even though we may understand it is not possible unless we are fully yielded to the will of God for our lives.

Let us consider **Eph. 5:18-20**, “**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (20) always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.**” Just because we may be able to intellectualize the concept that God is sovereign, though we can give mental assent to the fact that he is working all things together for good, none of this will produce thanksgiving in all things in our lives unless we are spirit-filled, unless we are willing to die to our selves and our desires and to want only His will to be done.

If you are here this morning and you know that God is sovereign and that the Bible tells us that He is working all things after the counsel of his will for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, and yet you do not see thanksgiving flowing from your lips to God, both in good times and in bad, what do you have to conclude? I believe that you have to conclude that you are struggling with sin, that you are struggling with the flesh. What do you need to do? You need to confess your sin, deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Him once more in your life. **WHAT COULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR US THAN THIS ON THIS HOLIDAY WEEKEND?**