

## **SLOW TO SPEAK & SLOW TO ANGER**

James 1: 19-21 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

This short text doesn't have any title I have found to perfectly match all three of these verses in our text. James is so much like the Old Testament Proverbs. There is a profound amount of wisdom in just a few of his pungent, pithy, and powerful words. Perhaps, if I had a second chance to re-title this message, it would be "MEEKLY RECEIVE THE IMPLANTED WORD." If I had a third chance, I might re-title it, "PUT AWAY CHILDISH THINGS." If I had a fourth chance, it might be: "QUIT PROFESSING WHAT YOU DON'T POSSESS." If I were to get a fifth and final, last chance to re-title this message text, it might be: "CHANGE YOUR CONDUCT OR CHANGE YOUR NAME."

Some years ago, Bob Moorehouse, wrote an essay called, "The Paradox of Our Time." Here's a brief excerpt: "We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life, but not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We've conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things. Everything we build is stronger and faster. We've come a long way in a short time. The engine of human progress hums right along. We send men to the moon, satellites into orbit, and radio waves to the stars." Millions in America claim to be born again. How many of us as professing believers exemplify a changed life? It is not always true that a prayer to be saved, saves us, whether it is a prayer at the altar of a church, or where we are seated in church, if we respond to an invitation for a raising of our hand, or if we say a prayer at Snow Camp or pray to be saved in VBS or in Sunday School. God often saves us at those times. Yet James is telling us, unless we have a changed life, we still need to be saved.

Paul said it also in II Corinthians 5: 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come." Not all professions of salvation bring regeneration in a born-again life. Children and adults can make decisions to invite Jesus into their hearts, and they may be followed up, be baptized, and join the church and yet not be saved. Even public baptism is not fool-proof evidence of a changed life. James is telling us that real salvation brings regeneration and transformation, not perfection. Nevertheless, a change in our hearts must occur when Jesus comes into our hearts. Real salvation is proved when our walk with God matches our talk. When a professing believer regularly finds church boring, irrelevant, and wants nothing to do with God, His Word, His church, with prayer, and prefers hanging out with unbelievers, that professor of salvation may not be a possessor of salvation. If this has happened, it doesn't matter if any of us would say, "I made a decision for Christ Sunday morning, on April 29, 2018 at church, or last summer at camp, or home with my Mom or Dad

two years ago. True born-again experiences are exemplified by a walk with God, a changed heart, life, and a humble and eager willingness to want to hear and follow God's Word. The test of true salvation that God imparts, James 1: 18 tells us is when we are converted, regenerated by God's will, and He brings us forth as born-again believers, making us His begotten sons or daughters by His Word of Truth.

Jesus spoke of professors of salvation, or decision makers, appearing to be saved, but who are never truly saved, because they never bear fruit. In Mark 4: 3-9, Jesus spoke to a multitude while sitting in a boat off shore. This is what Jesus said, "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." And Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus interpreted His parable in Mark 4: 14-20, saying, in essence, the hard, un-responsive hearts are the seeds that fell by the roadside. The birds quickly ate the seeds, and they did not take root at all. Next, He described the seeds that fell on the thin, rocky soil represent shallow, impulsive hearts, driven by emotion, to make a decision that is not a true commitment. These persons receive the Word with joy, but as soon as trials or persecution hit, these persons fall away. The third group are those where the seed fell on thorny ground, representing those with divided, worldly hearts. The thorns eventually choked out the Word. The one thing that is common about the wayside group, the rocky soil group, and the thorny ground group is that none of these three groups bear fruit. Two of the three groups look good for a little while, but none of them produce fruit. Jesus was saying that none of these three types of people are truly saved. This then begs the question, "Which kind of hearers of the Word are truly saved?" James goes on in James 1: 22-25 to say, "truly saved people are more than hearers of the Word, but they are doers of the Word." Yet, in our text today, James 1: 19-21, James describes the character of those who are truly saved. James begins his words by addressing them to "my beloved brothers, and we might add my beloved sisters." James is not describing ways to act to make people think we are saved. No, never! He is rather describing five ways truly saved, born again believers show that they are redeemed. What are these five characteristics of true salvation in us as believers? None of us exemplify these five characteristics perfectly, but these characteristics must be, part and parcel, of our lives, if we are truly born again.

**ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE TO RECEIVE WITH MEEKNESS, THE IMPLANTED WORD OF GOD THAT IS ABLE TO SAVE OUR SOULS.** (I.) We read, in verse 19 and 21 these words, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person... receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.” We are starting with this last phrase in verse 21 because in chronological order, there is no regeneration, no salvation, no justification in our lives until we receive with meekness the implanted or engrafted Word which saves our souls. This Greek word for implanted or engrafted is a word used only once in the Bible. It is **emphutos**. It is a compound word with “**en**,” meaning in a fixed position and the other word is **phuo** which means to puff, to blow, to swell up, and it all has to do with germination and growth, meaning to sprout or spring up. James just told us in James 1: 18 that “Of God’s own will, He brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. Now in verse 21, James is saying it another way. He is saying, “We must meekly receive the engrafted or implanted Word which is able to save our souls. When the Word of God is meekly received, it swells up, it puffs up, and like a bean seed that doubles in size before it sprouts, the Word of God begins to grow in our hearts. It is like the Word of God expands, it grips our attention, it fixates in our minds, and as we ponder and think on it, it sprouts because God has used a portion of His Word to bring us His new life. First, before the Word is implanted or engrafted in us and starts growing, we must be willing to listen to the Bible. The Greek word for receive is **dechomai**. It means to take with the hand or heart or to lay hold of. But there is one other little word—meekness and that Greek word is **praetes**. **Praetes** means a humble inner disposition of gratefulness, which is really a work of God’s grace. It’s the very opposite of “Give that to me now.” No, it is a humble trembling tempered spirit that sees God’s hand outstretched to us with His Word, and we take what He puts in our hands, We dechomai, lay hold on it and we treasure that Word of God which is able to save our souls. Put it together and God is saying, verse 19 to every one of us as beloved brothers and sisters that the genesis of our salvation began when He reached down His hand to us and gave us His Word. With a humble, meek and thankful heart, with an inner disposition of longing for God’s Word, we lay hold of it and take it into our hands and into our hearts. Once inside our hearts, like a bean seed that begins to swell up, the Word of God springs up in us to eternal life and God saves our souls.

If you hear of salvation being an order of “two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, in a sesame seed bun," remember, that isn't the Gospel. It isn't something we pay for or work for or order up. No, it is our grace-filled inner desire to accept what God is reaching out His hand to give us with His Word and when we receive His Word, it sprouts into eternal life in our hearts. What do these explanations say to you? Are any of us here today getting what James is saying? Are any of us saying to ourselves, “I've been fooling myself. I call

myself a Christian, but I'm not." If that's your reaction to James' diagnosis here, to God's diagnosis through these words of James, there's only one thing for you to do. Run to Jesus Christ, meekly receive the Word of God stretched out to you, and let it sprout into eternal life today. There is only one way, peace through the power of Christ's cross. We can't fix ourselves. The Christian life is not an endless series of resolutions to do better and better, yet often failing. The Christian life is not turning-over a new leaf. The Christian life is not just the latest and greatest self-help remedy. The Christian life is a recognition that we do not have within ourselves the energy, the power, or the ability to change ourselves. By the implanted, engrafted Word of God, we learn we need to look to Jesus alone, at the cross. When we renounce our own ability to try to change ourselves, and we run to Him for grace to change us, then we find salvation and His grace to change us. If you're diagnosed by the word of God today and realize that you're fooling yourself, that's where you need to go. If you profess the Christian faith, but you realize that you don't possess it, let God's implanted, engrafted Word today turn you to Jesus to save your soul. Secondly,

**ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE TO BE QUICK TO HEAR.** (II.).

We read in verse 19, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear..." None of us are perfect at this, but it needs to be an inner evidence that shows others we have been with Jesus. Someone said, "We have two ears and only one tongue in order that we may hear more and speak less." A poet said it this way. "A wise old owl lived in an oak. The more he knew, the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he knew; Does that same thing apply to you?" How does this evidence happen? Remember, we do not work at being quick to hear so we can be saved. It will never work. No! When we are saved by grace through faith, this is one of the good fruits. Being quick to hear, or teachability is congenital for the born-again believer. The inner changes in us that stem from new life in Christ are congenital in the sense that they grow out of our new heart where God has engrafted and implanted His Word by His divine power. Don't believe any person who says that when we are truly saved, these changes are automatic and effortless. If that were true, the New Testament would not contain so many exhortations to our spiritual growth. How do changes like this happen? What gives us a teachable spirit? How does God give us the inner honesty and desire to be accountable believers who cultivate a heart that is receptive to God's word of truth? Paul said in Colossians 2: 6, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." We received Jesus Christ by receiving God's grace to receive His implanted Word of God. We grow the same way. When we see we justify ourselves, play games with others and with God, when we see we quibble with the Word of God, try to squirm out of accountability, and justify our wrong behavior, take it to the bank, we are not being quick to hear. Thirdly,

**ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE TO BE SLOW TO SPEAK.** (III.)

We read in verse 19, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person...be slow to speak...” James isn’t forbidding us from speaking and interacting with God’s word or stopping us from asking pertinent questions to gain understanding. Rather, God is confronting us when we are seldom silent before the Lord. When God’s word confronts our ways, are we quick to speak and argue with the Lord or with His promptings? Do we find our own justified excuses for why God’s voice to us through the Word or through others, doesn’t apply to us? Have we learned what young Samuel the prophet learned as a young boy? Have we learned to say, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening!”? We won’t hear from God if we’re doing most of the talking! A receptive heart controls the tongue. You see, the same meek receptive heart, the same humble disposition, must become willing to bend, to conform, and to submit to the implanted, engrafted Word of God. When we are truly saved, and we are walking with Jesus, we begin a new habit of stopping when we over-speak others, when we jump into the driver’s seat and control conversations with our demands, with our ultimatums, and with our threatened exodus if we don’t get our way. Believers, God is calling you and me to put away childish things—to be slow to speak. This doesn’t mean that we use silence to try to control a situation. No, it only means that a believer thinks and meditates and gets God’s permission by His Spirit to speak before with many words are uttered and we all commit sin. Fourthly,

**ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTER ARE TO BE SLOW TO ANGER.** (IV.)

We read in verse 19-20, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person...be slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” As I preach this message, it puts me on my knees. I once heard I once heard Adrian Rogers definition of the fear of God. He said, “The fear of God is “love on its knees.” The one who fears God the most, truly loves Him the best. The two go hand in hand. It’s hard to be angry, out of control, “step outside and we’ll settle this once and for all,” when you are meekly listening to God, being slow to speak, and now, also, slow to anger. James adds that our anger as men and women never produces the righteousness of God. It’s like putting old motor oil we drain into our omelet or our pancakes. It will never do. Who will eat them? We don’t help God out with our anger. If this is our daily pattern, we need to ask ourselves the question—“Has Jesus come into my heart and made me a new creature in Christ Jesus?” Inappropriate anger, that is our pattern of life, manifests our sinful heart condition. It’s not God's righteous plan for us. Something is deeply wrong. Our emotional life, our speech, the way we listen, our relationships, all of these indicators provide evidence of a lack of sanctification and if this is our pattern, it is a test of our real ungodliness, showing us the state of our Christianity. A continually angry man needs old things to pass away, all things to become new. An angry spirit is never a listening, teachable, receptive spirit. Fifthly and lastly,

**ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE TO PUT AWAY ALL FILTHINESS AND RAMPANT WICKEDNESS.** (V.)

We read in verse 19, 20, “Know this, my beloved brothers,” let every person, therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness.” “Putting aside” is James expression for taking off all our filthy clothes. This means all sorts of disobedience to God’s Word. There is no deal making here, “God, I’ll get rid of this thing, as long as I can keep this other thing. James is talking about the whole dirty mess we were when we came to the Lord. It’s not just pornography, immorality, homosexuality, gossip, covetousness, and drunkenness, no. It’s all filthiness, filthy pride, filthy grudges, filthy bitterness, filthy unforgiveness, filthy judging of others, filthy justifying of ourselves, filthy dishonesty, filthy slander, filthy legalism that is pharisaical and uses one scripture as a loophole for obeying another scripture and the list goes on. When God saves us, He doesn’t take us from drowning in the cesspool of sin and leave us to dangle our feet in the muck below, as we sit on the ledge of the pool. It’s the whole dirty mess of our wickedness. Paul says we take off the old self and let the Spirit fit us with a new self. All the baggage of our old way of life must go. As we begin to read God’s word, and let the Spirit convict us, He points out areas we didn’t use to think of as sin. When this happens, our receptive heart cleans out all the crud of sin and the Spirit helps us put on the clean clothes of new life in Christ. I ask you as the Spirit has spoken to me, what is there about putting away “all filthiness and rampant wickedness” that either you or I do not understand?

Sometimes, the last defense of accepting the truth of the Word is to attack the preacher, his style, or something in him you don’t like. Don’t hide behind my imperfections today, as I must not hide behind any of yours. The Welsh preacher, Rowland Hill (1744-1833), as an old man, was visiting with a longtime friend who said, “It is now 65 years since I first heard you preach. I still remember your text and a part of your sermon.” Rowland Hill asked, “What part of the sermon do you remember?” His friend answered, “You said some people, go to hear a sermon, and are very squeamish and upset with the the delivery of the preacher. Then you said, ‘Supposing you went to hear the will of one of your relatives read, and you were expecting a legacy from him. You would hardly think of criticizing the way in which the lawyer read the will, but you would be all attention to hear whether anything was left to you, and if so, how much. That’s the way to hear the Gospel.’” Today, I ask us, is the fruit of our salvation being evidenced in our humbly being hungry for more and more of the engrafted, implanted Word of God? Are we quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, and putting away all filthiness and wickedness? None of us are perfect, but has we allowed Jesus to make a big change in our lives. Since Jesus came into my heart, are we changed?