

I remember in college my uncle was dying of cancer and was not able to bring the cattle down from the upper pastor and brand them. The calves had to be branded, castrated and vaccinated. However, these calves were no longer calves, but now yearlings. We had to do all this without a proper corral or squeeze chute. By the end of the day I was exhausted from bulldogging yearlings down. I was working on the last one and could not get it to go down. My grandfather told me to hold still, but I tried harder to take the young bull down. I grew angry because my granddad was interfering and he was in his late eighties. I told him he needed to stay clear because I did not want him to get hurt and thought to myself what really could he do at his age? I did not listen to my grandfather and grew more tired. Finally my grandfather took hold of my shoulder and told me to stop and hold still. I finally listened and stopped; after all he might have an idea having been a rancher all his life. I stood there with my arm around the bull's neck and my granddad took a 2 by 4 he had been leaning on and hit the bull between the eyes stunning it. He said to me, son now take him down. I took the bull down with little effort. I had been slow to hear, too quick to speak and quick to become frustrated or angry. Our passage in James this morning hit me right between the eyes like a 2 by 4 and stunned me as I began my study this week.

I hope the younger people here today heard my story and here this message and listened, and understand older people have learned a thing or two about life by living it and have wisdom to share. God is old also, in fact he is eternal and he knows everything, so we should listen and learn from our Creator, our parents and other God fearing adults.

Let us pray for our time in God's word this morning.

Please for the reading of God's Word from James letter chapter 1, beginning in verse 19, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

²² "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

²⁶ "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." Please be seated.

Here, my beloved, James presents a third test of what it means to be a true believer. Remember, the first test is how a person responds to the trials in their life. There will most certainly be trials and the way believers respond should have different goals from those who are unsaved. James taught us in verses 1 to 12 that if we seek God during these times of trial he will give us wisdom and we will be able, by the power of the Spirit and Word to remain steadfast in our faith. The second test was how one responds to temptation in verses 13 to 18. Knowing all good things come from God. It is Satan that wants us to give into our desires, weaknesses and sins for he knows the destruction that follows. Now we have arrived at the third test; how a believer responds to the truth revealed in the Word beginning in verse 19 and carried

through to verse 27. This morning we will spend our time on verses 19 to 21 with a focus on 19.

Quick To Hear

James says to start with, we need to be good listeners. It is important to listen to the right things and the standard for what is right is found in the Bible. Jesus said, **“Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.”** (Mark 4:24) Jesus also said as recorded in Luke, **“Take care then how you hear.”** (Luke 8:18) The world is corrupt and speaks corrupt things that believers should not heed. Watching a movie is not sinful - if it is the right movie. Unfortunately, in today’s world finding a movie that is not an affront to the Bible is becoming harder. We are equipped by God’s Word to know what is right for the kingdom of heaven and therefore, right for our lives. We need to read and study God’s Word, in it Jesus tells us, **“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven ... ¹⁶ blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”** (Matthew 13:11 & 16) Just as the Word of God gave power to our new birth, so too, it is the power for the living of our new life with Christ. The key is for us to hear and submit to God’s Word taking it into our hearts, and then living out God’s Word.

James begins verse 19 with, **“Know this, my beloved brothers.”** His phrase **“Know this”** is referring back to all he has covered in the first 18 verses. The truths of the Word are black and white, but as saved sinners it can still be hard to submit and at times we look for the gray. Paul understood the only way to overcome our sin nature was to rely on the Spirit and the Word, he wrote to Timothy, **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”** (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Continual and faithful hearing and reading of God’s Word changes a person. Submitting to God’s Word transforms us into the

new creation God gave birth to in our souls and does divine work in us throughout our lives.

James follows “[Know this](#)” with “[my beloved brothers](#).” James knew it is not easy to fully submit; after all he heard God, his half-brother Jesus, speak all his life, saw him perform miracles, signs and wonders, and did not believe until Jesus rose from the dead. Because of James’ dead soul he did not listen and what he did hear he did not understand. It took his brother, Jesus rising from the dead to open the eyes of James’ soul. James has a tender spot in his heart for those who are saved and want to learn what it means to live a true Christian life. If the teacher does not have a genuine love for those he is teaching, as James did, then they will only be able to teach intellectually. Jesus loved the disciples and his followers. So unlike the Jewish leaders what Jesus taught with love penetrated their hearts and minds. James loves the brethren and wants them to listen with their hearts and minds as well. If they understand James’ love for them they will listen even to the hard things they must learn and conquer.

James’ first principle for believers is “[let every person be quick to hear](#).” As Christians we are to be careful listeners and making sure we pay attention to what is being said in order to fully understand. President Franklin Roosevelt often endured long receiving lines at the White House where many people passed through. He complained to his wife and staff that no one really paid any attention to what was said. One day, during a reception, he decided to try an experiment. To each person who passed down the line and shook his hand, Roosevelt murmured softly, “I murdered my grandmother this morning.” The guests responded with phrases like, “Marvelous! Keep up the good work. We are proud of you. God bless you, Mr. President.” It was not till the end of the line, while greeting the ambassador from Bolivia that his words were truly listened to. Bewildered at Roosevelt’s words, the ambassador leaned over and whispered, “I’m sure she had it coming.” Just like in

life among other people, if one reads the Bible without really listening they will not understand the true meaning of what is being said. Most of the people who passed through the reception line proved themselves to be concerned with self at best or fools at worst for they listened not. We need to listen to what God has to say.

Let me ask, when you listen do you focus on the person communicating with you? Do you look them in the eye? Do you think you can multitask? Good listening is like tuning in a radio station. For good results, you can listen to only one station at a time. Trying to listen to my wife while looking at Facebook or watching TV is like trying to receive two radio stations at the same time. I end up with distortion and she ends up frustrated. **Good listening requires the listener to choose where to focus his attention. All that could divide his attention must be set aside.** That might mean laying down the newspaper or laptop or moving or putting down the book one is reading or setting aside the project he is working on and focusing to listen.

James is saying we should look for every opportunity to tune in and focus on the “**word of truth.**” We are to take a hold of the Word and not let it go until it blesses us. We are not to change the Word of God but let his words change us. The passages in the Bible will bless you, grow you, strengthen you, correct you, encourage you, discipline you and comfort you, if you listen. The “**word of truth**” is the source of deliverance from trials and temptations. The “**word of truth**”, the Word of God is the life breath to a believer. Great effort should be given to hearing the Word when you read it and when it is preached. We all work hard, but you really should try not to go asleep during my sermon, it is just possible you might miss something important.

My beloved, you should occasionally take your spiritual temperature – how great is your thirst and hunger for God’s Word? **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law or word of the LORD, and on his law and word**

he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2) Let me ask, if you do not listen to the Lord through His Word and prayer, before your day starts, do you notice the difference in you day? Do you notice the difference in how you behave? Spiritual maturity begins with listening; first to God and then to other Christians in your life. This is something I need to work on and will have to continue to work on - how about you?

Slow To Speak

King Solomon, the mostly wise king, wrote, **“Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.”** Those going through the reception line at the White House, if they had, remained silent would have left the president wondering as to their understanding and if they were fools or not. Solomon went on to say, **“Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”** (Proverbs 17:28 and 29:20) The fool has more hope because he may remain silent, but the man who speaks hasty and rashly has no hope. Have you ever wanted to take back your words? The problem is once you have said a foolish or hateful statement you cannot take it back and saying I am sorry does not erase the words.

This brings us to the second caution given by James in verse 19 a believer is to be **“slow to speak.”** One cannot listen carefully while they are talking or even while they are thinking how to respond. This is my problem, listening but at the same time I am thinking how I will respond. As I said earlier, this passage hit me between the eyes like my granddad hit the bull with the 2 by 4. Not only can we not truly hear what someone is saying if we are formulating our response, but this is also true with hearing God’s Word. **If our thoughts are flittering back and forth from God’s Word to other things such as work, bills, children, etc. our distraction may cause us to miss what God wants to teach us.** James is saying once one has listened intently then it is time to carefully think out our response and consider our words

before we speak.

This reminds me of the toothpaste my brothers and I shared as children. Their approach to the tube drove me crazy. You see words are like a tube of toothpaste. If used the right way, toothpaste helps clean our teeth and keep our mouth healthy. Words are the same way. If we use our words to cheer someone up and say nice, helpful things, our words can bring joy and spiritual health to another person.

Sometimes we can get sloppy with our toothpaste. It can leak all over the cap and make an annoying mess. The same is true with our words. Sometimes we aren't careful and little cut-downs or grumblings slip out of our mouth. When we are sloppy with our words, we make little messes. We end up with people in bad moods and hurt feelings.

Now if you squeeze really hard on a tube of toothpaste, like my brothers did at times, all the toothpaste comes squirting out. What a mess that makes! Our words can do the same thing. When you open your mouth and speak hurtful and mean things you make a huge mess! Have you ever tried shoving toothpaste back into the tube after it has been squirted out? You cannot get it back in, can you? The same is true with your words. Once you say those hurtful things, you cannot take them back. Saying "sorry" or "I was just kidding," does not take the sting of those words away. Long after you have forgotten what you have said, the person you talked to meanly will remember it. You cannot take your words back, just like you cannot put toothpaste back into the tube.

The Bible says, "Reckless words pierce like a sword..." Those are the messy toothpaste words. They hurt people. They can make a mess in our lives and the lives of others. The Proverb continues, "...but the tongue of the wise brings healing." (Proverbs 12:18) James is teaching that those who listen well and consider their words wisely breathe truth and healing into people's lives. Just like when

toothpaste is used correctly it cleans and refreshes and helps to keep our lives healthy. The truth of God's Word can be delivered with a hardness that can break teeth, which is a painful mess or God's Word can be given with firm kindness that heals and cleans the soul.

We all know someone who does not have an unspoken thought. The idea James is communicating is that we are to be careful and consider our words and how they will affect others. We want to speak truth, but do so in a way that is edifying and honors the Lord. This is why in chapter 3 James says, [“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”](#) (James 3:1) If you are not studying the Word, then how can you communicate it well and speak the Lord's truth?

For example Amram is the father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Miriam is also Mary the mother of Jesus according to the Quran in Surahs, 3:35-36, 19:27-28 and 66:12. Sounds like a great lineage having Jesus directly related to his grandfather Amram and uncles Moses and Aaron and his mother Miriam. The problem is that Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron lived 1500 years before Mary the mother Jesus. Mohammed did not pay attention when he read or heard the Old and New Testaments in the late 6th century. His soul was spiritually dead and the result was a 1500 hundred-year mistake that messes up the lineage of Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Mary and Jesus. We find the same problems in the apocryphal books canonized by the Catholic Church, which have interesting stories. The Protestant Church does not accept these books as scripture because even though they have interesting and historical stories they contain many mistakes and therefore we know, just like the Quran, they were written by men, not God. Since they contain many mistakes they are not the truth of God. Speaking for God with facts that are not true facts is not just a problem of Islam and the Catholic Church, but it true of Mormonism and many churches that use the name “Christian” but teach things that are not consistent

with the Bible. These have not listened to God and they speak quickly and they speak falsehoods.

We now understand the scope of what James was referring to when he said, “**slow to speak.**” **The responsibility all Christians bear is to speak truth with love and gentleness, in order to challenge people to accept or reject God’s truth.** When I say God’s truth, I mean God’s truth, not man’s attempt at truth. We are called to be purveyors of God’s truth in a broken world.

Slow To Anger

Lastly James says we are to be “**slow to anger.**” Anger is the natural response of mankind when they do not get their way. This is also true for believers, who are not spiritually prepared, they can respond with anger to anything that harms or displeases them. Paul writes to the Ephesians, **“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.”** (Ephesians 4:26-27) Here Paul quotes Psalm 4:4 and is saying should circumstances arise to call for anger on your part, let it be as Christ’s “anger” as found in Mark’s Gospel. Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and healed a man’s hand. The Pharisees wanted to use this against him. They claimed Jesus had violated the Sabbath and they attacked him. Jesus asked them, **“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?”** The Pharisees fell silent for God would not be against someone who heals. Jesus looked around at these men it says in verse 5, **“with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.”** (Mark 3:4-5) Jesus’ anger was righteous and without sin.

Our natural feelings of anger are not wrong when directed to their legitimate object, and when not exceeding due bounds. We can have anger with someone who rapes or murders. But we must be slow to anger to ensure our anger is righteous and within proper limits and demonstrates honor to God. It is when anger is not

righteous and does not glorify God that there is a problem. James writes later in his letter concerning problems within some of the churches. He writes, “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.” (James 4:1-2) Things have not changed, people are the same and this is the problem within the church when people do not listen intently to God’s “word of truth” and let it change them from the ways of the fallen world to the path of God that says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)

So James is not dealing with righteous anger, but the anger those have who hear the Word of God and resent it for exposing their personal false ideas and beliefs and ungodly lifestyles. It is the same today, as Christians when we speak God’s truth to the world often we can say as Paul said, “Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16) The world and even some who say, “I am Christian” respond yes, you are my enemy! When we teach and preach the truth of God completely without compromise and without any omission, God teaches that this is the kindness and most loving thing, and the world responds with unrighteous anger.

We are called to be “slow to anger” so that our anger is righteous and within proper boundaries and glorifies God. Personal anger or bitterness does not serve the cause of Christ or glorify him. We are to model our behavior after Christ and if the world reacts with hostility we take to heart the words of our Lord, “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.” (Luke 6:22-23) Be quick to hear God, be careful as you speak for God and be slow to anger and pray for our enemies and the enemies of our Lord. Amen!