

James 1:19-21 (Part One)

By way of introduction I want to look at the believers response to the Word. First there was a response to trials (1:2-11), second there was a response to temptation (1:12-18), and now in our text today we see the believers response to the Word. I want us to walk through this together on some important truths we find in this text. The most important, how we respond to God's Word. Because it is our response to what God says that determines our actions.

Just as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, so should believers desire the Word of God. Jesus said this in John 8:31 "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed." Furthermore, in Mark 4:24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more." The disciples were to pay close attention to what they hear and read, measuring all things to Scripture. Genuine discipleship is measured by one's obedience to Scripture. Christians are to pay keen attention to the content of what they hear and read, measuring every idea, every principal, and every standard against the infallibility of God's Word. Believers are to compare movements, laws, ideas and other things-against the truth of Scripture. They are to compare what they hear with what God says.

How do we affirm what is biblically right and what lines up with Scripture? God hasn't left us alone. He has given us the Spirit of God to indwell in us. We should understand this passage fully, 1 Corinthians 2:12 "What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us." As genuine Christians we are connected to the Spirit of God. And from that we have the responsive ability to determine what is real and biblical and make godly decisions. 1 Corinthians 2:15 "But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one." On what premise do you make judgements? The Word of God is the premise for such. When we are connected to God, the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit makes us responsive to the Word of God.

The person who is truly related to Christ through saving faith, redemption, will respond to the Words of God. On the contrary, those who have no real interest in the Words of God much less obeying, give evidence that one does not belong to Him. If you say you are a believer, you even come to church, but you don't obey God's Word, you rationalize sin, live as the rest of the world lives, the likelihood of you being converted is zero.

True believers keep and obey God's Word, cf. John 14:21-24. There are some who have opposed God's Word and some who do today also. It's only natural for the lost to oppose truth. There are unbelievers who quote Scripture verses to support their own beliefs, standards or objectives, but they don't cherish God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:8 "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith." Paul warned Timothy of such, 2 Timothy 4:14-15 "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching." It's easy to understand why the wicked oppose the Words of God, Psalms 119:155

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"Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Your statutes." Jesus responds to those who oppose His Word in John 8 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God."

I say all that to bring us to the point in our text where James says, "So then, my beloved brethren." Of course we see the conjunction which ties in the previous verses of God not changing and He bringing us forth into salvation. Glory to God. James refers to his readers as beloved brethren. Teaching is not about making people more intellectual. It is about seeing them grow in their love for the Lord and knowledge of knowing Him. This is why I teach and preach. This is why we go through the Word of God slowly, verse by verse, address cultural, social issues from a biblical view. I want you to grow deeper into His Word by embracing the truth of God's Word and its effects on your life.

Be quick to hear. Quick to hear who? Your spouse? No, quick to hear the Words of God. We must be a careful listener, making sure we pay attention to get the message right. Proverbs 17:28 "Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is *considered prudent.*" Proverbs 29:20 "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him." James' appeal for believers to seize every opportunity to increase their exposure to Scripture, to take advantage of every privileged occasion to read God's Word or hear it faithfully preached or taught. The sincere desire of such learning is a sure sign of a child of God.

When a believer is troubled he searches the Word of God for help. He searches for comfort. When he is blessed, he turns to find passages in the Word of thanksgiving and praise. When he is tempted he turns and searches the Word for God's standards of purity and holiness for power to resist. Not only is the Word a source of deliverance in times of trouble and temptation, but it's communion with God in our life. Too many people are looking to hear from God in some mystical formations of clouds or trees or some kind of sign. No, read His Word.

The true believer will be marked by such an attentive spirit, which will find a way to be in the Scriptures regularly, not for the purpose of allowed devotional time, but to grow in the knowledge of God's Word. When so called pastors and leaders start telling stories and using props instead of preaching the text of God's Word, the sheep will starve and follow anything. You won't have to beg and plead for a true believer to come to church to hear God's Word.

Slow to speak. One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Ecclesiastes 3:7 "A time to be silent and a time to speak." We are slow to speak and should be, because we have been quick to hear what God says. You can't listen while you're talking or even thinking about saying something. Many discussions are fruitless because all parties are more interested in saying than listening. In context, it seems that slow to speak, included the idea of being careful not to be think about one's own

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thoughts and ideas while someone else is trying to express what God's. We cannot really hear God's Word when our minds are on our own thoughts. We need to keep silent inside as well.

The idea is when the appropriate time to speak comes, what is said should be carefully thought out. When we speak or the Lord, in teaching, preaching and other situations, what we say not only is true but is spoken in a way that edifies those who hear and honors the Lord.

We should be cautious and careful when we have opportunity when we preach, teach or otherwise speak of God's Word. I am aware and take James 3:1 very seriously, *"Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment."* I do not rush into the pulpit on some whim and some vision I got an hour before the service. When asked questions about God or one's response to situations I carefully try to search the pages of Scripture to help with that answer. (Illustration of Roman orator)

We see new converts, celebrators and other figures rise to speak on subjects of theology they know nothing about. They haven't listened to God or His Word on what the matters says. They begin to give advise based off what they know, which often is misguided and bad theology, instead of digging into the pages of Scripture. The Bible warns of a new convert being elevated to elder status 1 Timothy 3:6 *"and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."* 1 Timothy 5:22 *"Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin."* Judging from James 1:26; 3:1 teachers in the church were guilty of saying whatever comes to mind. They apparently did this without council or thought of God's commands. It seems they were carelessly checking their words against Scripture.

If you think God spoke to you about a matter, then you should check it against Scripture. Likely you heard what you have read in His Word. Speaking too quickly is not healthy. James 3:14 *"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth."* James 4:1a, 11a *"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you..."* *"Do not speak against one another, brethren..."* and finally James 5:9 *"Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."*

Much of the discontent in the church is a result of people offering their "opinions" rather than what the Word of God says. If a matter is to be addressed, make your decision and speak your convictions from the Word, not culture or humanistic philosophy. As your pastor I open up the blessed Word of God each Lord's Day with fear. I am compelled through study and preparation to say nothing in God's name that doesn't accurately reflect God's Word.