

Quick To Hear, Slow To Speak And Slow To Anger, James 1:18-21

I never know how reliable statistics and polling data really are, but George Barna of the Barna Research Group and ARIS (American Religious Identification Survey: <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v17n2/evangelical-demographics.html> and http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac2.htm) indicates that the proportion of the American population that classifies themselves as Christian has declined from 86% in 1990 to 77% in 2001 (and is still falling). Thus, even with this decline, still roughly **3 out of every 4 Americans claims to be a Christian**. The number of Americans who claim to be Protestant Christians is just below 50 percent of the nation's population (**1 out of every 2 Americans**), while people who claim to be "Born Again" Christians in the broadest sense are about 25% of Americans (**1 out of 4**). Yet only about 7% (**only 1 in 14**) of the adult population of Americans classify themselves as Evangelical Christians (i.e. they believe in the necessity for a changed life through conversion, they tend to read the Bible literally and believe that they should follow the Bible as a Guide for life, and they stress the Critical Importance of Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross). So who are *really* Christians? It seems to me that there can be no more important question. Are you truly Saved? Have you been Born Again? Will you go to Heaven when you die?

The Bible indicates that many are deceived, that many are counterfeits, and therefore, we must carefully examine ourselves as to whether we are Truly in the Faith, **II Cor. 13:5**. One of the most sobering, even frightening, passages of Scripture is in **Matt. 7:13-27**. To be shocked in Eternity by being told by Christ that He never knew you and to depart from Him into Hell would be an incomprehensible horror! Do you have Faith, Real, Saving Faith? The Book of James is most helpful in that it gives several Tests to help us determine whether we are Truly in the Faith, and/ or whether our Faith is Real. E.g. 1) **the TEST of Trials, vs. 1-12**; 2a) **the TEST of Temptation, vs. 13-16**; 2b) **the Solution For Temptation, vs. 17-18**

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. The very best Gift God ever Gave the world is the Gift of His Son, Jesus, and the Salvation we Receive through Him by Faith. Are you truly Saved?

18 In the exercise of His Will HE BROUGHT US FORTH (New Birth) **BY** (instrumental cause) **THE WORD OF TRUTH, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.** In stark contrast with the morbid scene of death that is the offspring from our unbridled lust (giftedness?), **vs. 14-15**, is the brilliant scene of New Life in God, the Father of Lights, that Shines from the Word of Truth, **vs. 17-18**; cf. **I Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:13**. ***God's Chosen Firstfruits***, or Regenerated believers, overcome temptation as they learn to Receive/ Draw on **the Word of Truth**. By the New Birth, a believer is Recreated, Given a completely New Nature apart from sin or evil. Our own lust (giftedness) begets death, **vs. 15**, but the Gift of God in Christ begets Life, and ***True Believers DEMONSTRATE that they are the 1ST FRUITS of God's New Creation*** that is to come. But, do you Truly have Saving Faith?

3) **The next TEST of our Faith is Found in Our Response to God's Word, 1:19-27**. Receptivity/ Responsiveness to the Word of God are Evidence of Spiritual Life and Growth. A True believer will Accept (Submit to) God's Word, Act on (Obey) it, and Abide in it. The Context of this passage is ***the Word of Truth, vs. 18, 21, 22, 23, 25***.

A. Receptivity to the Word, 1:19-21: ¹⁹ This you know (or, know this), **my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man**

does not achieve the Righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, IN HUMILITY RECEIVE THE WORD IMPLANTED, which is ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS. James identified his audience, **My dear brothers** (*True* believers), and then made it clear *in the Context* of what constituted **True Faith: you can know this**, or “**know this.**” Whatever else may be in question, REGARDING THE WORD OF TRUTH, a threefold injunction follows: **let everyone... be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.**

When the True Disciple hears God’s Word, there is Affection for its Truth and a Desire in his Heart to Obey it. One of the most reliable Evidences of Genuine Salvation and Saving Faith is a Hunger for the Word of God, **Psm. 42:1; I Pet. 2:1-3.** Just **as a newborn baby** naturally hungers for its mother’s milk, the newborn child of God should not have to be taught to Hunger for God’s Word as his Spiritual food and drink. That is the natural impulse (Evidence) of his New Spiritual Life, his New Creation; contra. premature, questionably viable, or stillborn; cf. **Matt. 13:3-6, 18-21.** To use another metaphor, his Spiritual dial is tuned to the frequency of Scripture, **John 8:31;** contra. the growing **NEGLECT** of God’s Word in churches today; cf. Laodicea age?!?! Are you truly Saved?

Willingness to Receive the Word with Submission is Evidence that believers are becoming “the First Fruits among His creatures,” vs. 18. James now makes a clear transition in emphasis. Having experienced the Transforming Power of God and having been made New Creations, we are to *continually* Submit to God’s Word, allowing it to continue its Sanctifying Work in and through our lives, **II Tim. 3:16-17.** **James now gives three important Commands for the believer who is willing to receive God’s Word with submissiveness.**

First, we must **BE QUICK TO HEAR** (God’s Word), i.e. **be a careful listener**, making sure to get the Message right. In any field of knowledge we learn by listening, not by speaking; cf. **Rom. 10:17; Psm. 119:11.** James’s appeal is 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 to Hear It faithfully preached or taught. The sincere, eager desire for such learning is one of the Surest Marks of a True Child of God. Periodically, every Christian should do a personal inventory regarding his hunger and thirst for God’s Word. He should ask himself with determined honesty, “Is my real delight, like the psalmist’s, truly in the Law of the Lord; and do I meditate on it day and night?” cf. **Psm. 1:2;** and, “If we miss reading Scripture before the day begins, do we notice a difference in the day and in ourselves?” The True believer will be eager on the Lord’s Day to assemble and fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ and to Worship their Lord. Are you truly Saved?

Second, the believer who Willingly Receives the Word with Submission must **be slow to speak.** That characteristic is a companion of the first. You cannot listen carefully while you are talking, or even while you are thinking about “exceptions” as to what the Bible says. Many discussions are fruitless for the simple reason that all parties are paying more attention to what they want to say than to what others (here, God in His Word) is saying.

In this context, therefore, it seems that **slow to speak** includes the idea of being careful not to be thinking about one’s own thoughts, opinions and ideas while someone else is trying to express God’s Word, **Isa. 55:8-9.** We cannot really hear God’s Word when our minds are on our own thoughts. We need to keep silent inside as well as outside. Test: Are you truly Saved?

When the appropriate time to speak does come, what is said should be carefully thought out in the Light of/ through the Grid of God’s Word. When we Speak for the Lord, we should have the gravest

concern that what we say not only is True, but is spoken in a way that both Edifies those who Hear and Honors the Lord in Whose behalf we speak; cf. [James 3:1](#); [II Tim. 2:15](#).

Third, the believer who Willingly Receives the Word with Submission must **be slow to anger**. In an argument, of course, the one who is listening rather than lambasting is the one who is slow to anger; cf. [3:1-12](#). Anger fails to yield the Righteous Life (**1st Fruits**) that God desires; i.e. this Epistle's Goal.

Anger is a very natural emotion that is an all but automatic response, even for believers, who are not Spiritually Prepared, to anything or anyone that harms or displeases them. Orge (anger) does not refer to an explosive outburst of temper but to an inner, deep resentment that seethes and smolders, often unnoticed by others. It is therefore an anger that only the Lord and the believer know about. Therefore, it is a special danger, in that it can be privately harbored. Are you truly Saved?

In this context, James seems to be speaking particularly about **anger at a Truth in God's Word** that confronts sin or conflicts with a cherished personal viewpoint. Paul asked believers in Galatia, "**So have I become your enemy by telling you the Truth?**" [Gal. 4:16](#). The answer doubtless was "yes." In reality, of course, Paul's persistently telling them God's Truth, without compromise or omission, was the kindest and most helpful thing he could do for them, or that anyone can do for someone else.

But throughout the history of the church, in fact, throughout the history of fallen mankind, even believers have too often resented God's Truth and the messenger who brought it. Sometimes a pastor must therefore be severe in challenging and rebuking that resentment, [I Cor. 4:18-21](#).

There is, of course, a just anger, a holy indignation against sin, Satan, and anything that dishonors the Lord or assaults His Glory. Jesus was intensely angry when He saw His Father's house, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, turned into "**a place of business**," and He expressed His anger twice by driving out those responsible for the desecration, [John 2:14-16](#); cf. Phinehas, [Num. 25](#).

But mere *personal* anger, bitterness, and resentment (even if frustrated while "serving Christ") can never really advance the Cause of Christ, for *the anger of man* does not achieve the Righteousness of God, that is, does not accomplish what is right in God's eyes. That is especially true when the hostility is against the Truth of God's Word, for that in Reality is against God Himself.

Willingness to Receive the Word with a Hunger for Purity

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word Implanted, which is able to save your souls. Consequently it is essential to put away, or remove, all moral filth ("dirty," in [2:2](#); used of wax in the ear, which impairs hearing [of God's Word]). Moral filthiness is a serious barrier to our clearly Hearing and comprehending the Word of God. We must ever be confessing, repenting of, and eliminating every vestige of lusts, [vs. 14-15](#), that corrupts our lives, reduces our Hunger for the Word, and clouds our Understanding of it, **and humbly** (lit., "in meekness") **Receive the Implanted Word**. "Planted" contrasts with grafted. The Word of God which can Save is to be ingrown or inborn, rooted in the fertile soil of the soul. The main verb, **receive**, is preceded by **putting aside all filthiness**; i.e. putting aside [literally, "**having put aside**"] all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness *is a condition for receiving* the Word Implanted. Before God's Word can produce His Righteousness in us, we must renounce and put away the sin in our lives that stands between us and that Righteousness, [Eph. 4:22-24](#); [Matt. 13:7-8, 22-23](#). Are you truly Saved?

Willingness to Receive the Word of God in Humility

in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls, 1:21b. Humility is appropriate because the idea is of *selfless* Receptiveness, of putting self, as well as sins, aside. In Humility we accept God's dealings with us as good, [vs. 2](#), and therefore without disputing or resisting;

i.e. teachableness cleansed of pride, anger, and every form of moral corruption; e.g. [Acts 17:11](#). Are you truly Saved?

Able to Save your souls first refers back to our initial Salvation, in which the Word brought the Truth of the Gospel to an unsaved heart, showing us the way of Salvation and Saving us from the penalty of sin; cf. [1 Pet. 1:23](#). We have been Saved (Justified) through the Power of the Word of God; we are kept Saved (Sanctified) through the Power of the Word; and we will be ultimately, completely, and Eternally Saved (Glorified) through the Power of the Word.

Are you truly Saved? Have you been Born Again? Will you go to Heaven when you die? James has given us this morning a Test as to whether we have True Faith. Is the Life of God *Evident* in you so much that you have a Hunger for God's Word and Longing to Obey and Please God? God Promises to Give New Birth and Eternal Life to all who Trust in Jesus Christ, God's son, as their Lord and Savior. Christ Died on the Cross to Pay for the Penalty of the sins of the whole world and He Rose from the grave to Give you Forgiveness and Christ's Gift Righteousness. Trust in Jesus today. Don't delay. Trust Him. You can Trust Him.