

Sunday, June 1, 2025 pm

STUDIES IN JAMES (6)

Swift to hear, Slow to speak

James 1:19-20

As we continue our study through the book of James, we last examined his encouragement to overcome temptations. James has described the way temptations can lead to sin, and if unrepented they lead to spiritual death (separation from God) – James 1:12-18. In that discussion James addressed how God does not tempt us toward evil (13), but rather He provides “every good and perfect gift” from above (17). In vs. 18, James noted that *of His own will, He brought us forth by the word of truth*. He has made a way for us to share with Him, that is to be in fellowship.

And he notes that it is by the word of truth that we understand this – God’s word is our guide to fellowship with Him – not merely knowing it but applying it. With that thought in mind, let us examine our text this evening – James 1:19-20

We often quote this verse as it relates to our conversations with others, and so it applies. But do not forget the context – influenced by His word. We need to factor that into our application.

I. **Be swift to hear – Are you listening?**

- a. Far too many today, do not listen. Some refuse. They will not listen to reason or challenges to their thoughts. Often they will allow someone to complete a thought. We see this often in political debate and news shows. The sad reality is that such is rude and demonstrates blindness (often willful) or an unwillingness to investigate. Proverbs 18:13, *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him*.
- b. The wisdom literature is filled with admonitions to listen!
 - i. Proverbs 4:1 - *Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding;*
 1. Solomon in the midst of challenging his children to choose wisdom notes that FIRST they need to hear instructions and pay attention.
 2. Remember the teacher that gave a test filled with difficult questions who told you to read the entire test before starting. And the last question was simple: Ignore everything above, put your name on the answer sheet and turn it in.
 3. How often do we hear something audibly, but do not pay close attention?
 - ii. Proverbs 13:8 - *The ransom of a man’s life is his riches, But the poor does not hear rebuke*. An example of foolishness. One is poor (remains such) because he refuses to listen and take advice about his foolish ways.
 - iii. Proverbs 15:31 - *The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise*. The wise listen and are willing to learn.
 - iv. Proverbs 20:12 - *The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The Lord has made them both*. God gave us ears, we need to listen!
 - v. Ecclesiastes 7:5 - *It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools*. What do you really want to hear? Do you want someone who tells you what you want, or someone who will tell you what you need?

- vi. Ecclesiastes 7:21 - *Also do not take to heart everything people say, Lest you hear your servant cursing you.* On the other side of this, use wisdom as you listen and do NOT read into what is said what was NOT there!
- c. Are you listening to God's word clearly?
 - i. Vs. 19 - Note that James begins "So then" which is a conjunction (a word that joins together in some way two words or phrases – e.g., and, or, but, if, etc.). This ties what James says directly to our relationship with God based upon the word of truth.
 - ii. While what we have observed is true and desperately needed, let us think about this where God's word is concerned.
 - 1. Matthew 17:5 – "...hear Him!"
 - 2. Romans 10:17 – faith comes by hearing
 - 3. James 1:22-25 – 3 times James here mentions hearing.
 - 4. Matthew 11:15 – *he who has ears to hear let him hear.* Recorded 3x in Matthew (13:9, 43) & to each of the 7 churches of Asia – Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22).
 - 5. Hebrews 4:1-2 – a problem with Israel in the wilderness. Continually they heard God's word, but they rejected it, often very quickly.
 - 6. A problem with the corrupt Jewish leaders – Matthew 13:13-15 (Isaiah 6:9-10) where Jesus explains why He spoke in parables
 - 7. Proverbs 28:9, *One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.*
 - 8. Ecclesiastes 5:1 - *Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.*
 - 9. Ecclesiastes 12:13 - *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.*
 - iii. We need to be CAREFULLY listening to God's word. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15 – putting forth diligent efforts in our studies.

II. **Be slow to speak – Are you sure?**

- a. Before we speak are our words well thought out? James will address our conversation throughout this letter. James 3:1-12 addresses this thoroughly. Cf. Matthew 12:36-37.
- b. The wisdom books also address this extensively. Concerning the ungodly:
 - i. Proverbs 10:19, *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.*
 - ii. Ecclesiastes 6:6-7, *Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.*
 - iii. Proverbs 11:9, *The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, But through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.*
 - iv. Proverbs 11:13, *A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.*
 - v. Proverbs 13:2-3, *A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth, But the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence. He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

- c. The wisdom books also address the godly tongue and restraint:
 - i. Proverbs 16:23, *The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds learning to his lips.*
 - ii. Proverbs 10:11, *The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.*
 - iii. Proverbs 15:1-2, *A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*
 - iv. Proverbs 17:9, *He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.*
 - v. Proverbs 11:12, *He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, But a man of understanding holds his peace.*
 - vi. Ecclesiastes 12:11, *The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.*
- d. Before we answer concerning God's word, have we thought about our response.
 - i. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, *Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.*
 - ii. Proverbs 15:28, *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*
 - iii. Again, 2 Timothy 2:15 – we are called to handle God's word accurately.
 - iv. Colossians 4:6, our speech is to be with grace so that we might know how to answer each one.
 - v. Jude 22-23 – on some we have compassion, while others we snatch out of the fire.
 - vi. 1 Peter 3:15 – being ready to give an answer means we have thought about it, and we are weighing our words.
 - vii. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 describes the “servant of the Lord” with many qualities that guard our conversations.
 - viii. As we teach others, it is imperative that what we teach is the whole counsel of God, without compromise or error. That requires that we be “slow to speak”.

We will continue this thought in our next lesson as we address being slow to wrath. Much more could be said about each of these points, but it is my hope that we see the need to control what we hear and say, even when we are provoked. Because how you speak and respond reveals your heart and will have a bearing on your eternity. Are you in control of what you hear and say? Think about it!