

Salt Church
James 1:26-27
The Religion of the Tongue
August 2, 2026
The Fruit of Salvation

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Recap

Here is where we were last week:

James 1:19-20

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers. 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.

- **We transitioned from asking for wisdom into how a wise person acts.**
 - Wise people are **quick** to listen
 - Wise people are **slow** to speak
 - Wise people are **slow** (**very slow**) to anger
- **We unfolded all of this by applying common sense**
 - God has given us two ears and one mouth
 - **Clearly, we need to listen twice as much as we speak**
 - Slow to speak means that you take the time to think and pray about what you need to say.
 - We know that no one has ever learned anything by talking but **most of what we have learned has come from listening.**

- Being quick to listen and slow to speak often keeps the child of God from being angry.
 - Why?
 - **Because often anger arises through gossip and incomplete stories.**
 - Most of us have been on the planet long enough to know that there is always another side of the story.
- **We were cautioned by the Holy Spirit last week with the reminder to:**
 - Not sin in our anger
 - Not let the sun set on our anger
 - And the reminder that mans anger “does not achieve the righteousness of God”

*We transitioned from anger to **the removal of all that is filthy and wicked in our lives:***

²¹ Therefore, **laying aside** all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness,

How?

- ***1st we are called to make an honest assessment of our lives.***
- ***2nd we are called to get rid of those things in our lives that God says are filthy.***
- ***3rd we are commanded to “get rid of all that remains of wickedness”***

We closed last week with what we have learned so far in our study of James:

- **1st Everyone has trials and tribulations**
 - The whole earth shares in this experience
 - **Christians have an advantage** in that they can rest in the fact that God the Father will use their pain and suffering to make them more like Jesus.
- **2nd Temptation is not from God**
 - God test and Satan tempts
 - If you find yourself in a difficult situation, ask yourself “**is this sinful in motivation or is this just difficulty**”
 - **If it is sinful in motivation, its temptation**
 - If not, it is a test
- **3rd We must be doers of the Word**
 - Listening or hearing the word of God is not enough
 - **The non-negotiable command on our lives is to be doers of the Word.**
 - To listen to the word of God and **not apply it to our lives** makes us no better than the demons.

Now to today's text

James 1:26-27 (LSB)

²⁶ If anyone thinks himself to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1:26-27 (NLT)

²⁶ If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. ²⁷ Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

We understand verse 26 to mean that a person who thinks of themselves as Christian but does not control his tongue has destroyed his witness.

- Why?
 - Let's look at it together

James 1:26-27 (LSB)

²⁶ If anyone thinks himself to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

- There are four key words here that must be completely understood in order for us to fully understand what The Holy Spirit is trying to convey through James.
- **Religious, bridling, tongue, & heart**
 - “Religious”
 - The Greek word is *thréskeia*
 - **Pronunciation:** thrace-KI-ah
 - **Definition:** ceremonial observance

From this definition we could say it this way:

“If anyone thinks of himself to be religious while not controlling his tongue he is deceived in his own heart and his ceremonial observance is worthless.”

- Therefore, if we equate Sunday morning with ceremonial observance as we come together in corporate worship and we do not control our tongue the rest of the week, God says “your worship, your religion is worthless.”

- *That’s heavy!*

- We read this and we are quick to think, “I better get control of my tongue” and that is true but the tongue is not the problem.

- The problem is the heart.

- In the Greek it is Kardia

- *It is the place where all thought originates.*

Jesus taught the same but He said it this way:

Matthew 12:34 (NLT)

... For whatever is in your heart determines what you say.

Matthew 12:34 (NIV)

... For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Matthew 12:34 (NKJ)

... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

What does this teach us?

- **It is all about the heart!**
 - Think of the tongue as the fruit of the heart
 - ***The overflow flow of your heart is what spills out of your mouth.***
- We want to control our tongue but the issue is truly our heart!
 - Whatever is coming out of our mouth is ***the evidence or the fruit*** of what is happening in our heart.

With all of this in mind we must remember who James is writing to, (the church.)

- His point is simple and very powerful.
 - Your religious ceremonies
 - Your “worship” is worthless if the fruit of your mouth is evil.
 - Why?
 - Because our mouths are a fantastic indicator of what is really going on inside of us.

This was nothing new for God’s people, they had heard it in the reading of Gods Word. (OLD TESTAMENT)

Ezekial 36:24-27

²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I

will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

- *Sounds a lot like James chapter 1 doesn't it*
 - God cleanses His people of filthiness (idols)
 - They get a new heart that is tender to the things of God.
 - They get His Spirit within them
 - And the fruit of all of this is, they worship with their lives as they walk in His ways and keep His judgements.
 - Part of walking in His ways is the overflow of their hearts pour forth glory to God.

Let's consider another familiar Old Testament passage:

Exodus 20:7 (The 3rd Commandment)

7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

- **This is so much more than using Gods name as a cuss word.**
- Truly this is saying, “**God told me or God showed me**” when God hasn't told you or showed you anything.
 - The false prophets that proclaims things in God's name that never come true are guilty of using Gods name in vain.
 - This is a very serious sin.
 - In fact in the Old Testament, those false prophets who claimed things in God's name that never came true were put to death by Gods people at Gods command.
- Some of you may know that there are still people who claim to be modern day prophets.

- They make wild and bold claims all in the name of the Lord
 - And when what they said **doesn't happen**, they simply say that God changed His mind.
 - We need to process that excuse for a second, God **who sees the past, the present, and the future** suddenly and unexpectedly changes His mind.

Here is what I think is going on:

- **People are so hungry for a word from God** that they will listen to these false prophets.
 - The sad part about this is that God speaks to you every time you read His Word.
 - **If you want a Word from God, pick up the Word of God.**

Before we move on to verse 27, I would like for you to look at James 3 because he really drills down to the issue of the tongue.

James 3:5-10

⁵ So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our existence, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed

and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

- I will address this very important passage when we get to chapter 3 but for today's purposes **lets grab the low hanging fruit** of this passage.
 - Our mouths have the ability **to set our world on fire**
 - These fires, when left unchecked can completely destroy us, our families, careers, homes, and churches.
 - **Satan knows this** and this is why he wants us to be unwise especially in our speech.
 - **Satan knows** that people who do not listen and are quick to speak provoke anger and destruction.
 - Yes, the tongue is tiny but very powerful.

Consider Hitler:

- Here was a man who stood about 5'9"
- He served in the military in WWI
- He served time in prison
- He was an artist by trade
 - But the paint brush was not his only gift
 - He had the gift of public speaking
 - His heart was evil so he used his gift for evil purposes

- His tongue lit a fire that killed an estimated 75 million people (WWII)
 - Did you know how many people he physically killed with his own hands during WWII?
 - Only one, himself.
 - ***The rest were slain by the fire that was started with his tongue.***

Back to James 3:6

“⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our existence, and is set on fire by hell.”

- No truer words could be spoken about Hitler
- No truer words could be spoken about Judas.
 - For he set his existence on fire when he lied about Jesus and sold Him for 30 pieces of silver.

If we learn nothing else today, we must know without a doubt that what we say matters and what we do matters.

Jesus had a conversation with the religious leaders of His day

- He was very firm in His assessment of the religious leaders of His day.
- They had added so many rules to the word of God that the religious traditions had superseded the word of God.
 - Meaning they had become more important than the word of God.

- Listen as Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah who said these word 750 years prior to this moment:

Matthew 13:6-11

Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

⁸ “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.”

¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

- The overflow of a man’s heart will spill out of his mouth.
 - Why?
 - Because **the tongue is the fruit of the heart.**

Here is what I know:

- The heart determines the attitude (bad attitude = bad heart)
- The attitude determines the decisions
- The decisions determine the actions
- The actions determine the future
 - This is why every man needs a new heart.

Now we are going to move on to the expectations of the Father

- But before we get to verse 27,
 - I need to remind you that **God determines how He will be worshiped, not man.**
 - The 1st and main requirement is that our worship be **“whole hearted”** anything less is **unacceptable.**
 - I need to remind you that this issue of half-hearted worship goes all the back to Adam and Eve.
 - Their hearts were divided when they chose to not believe what the Lord had said about eating the forbidden fruit.
 - Or perhaps a better example can be found in their sons Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.” ² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶ So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be

accepted? *And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*

- From the text we do know a few things:
 - Their worship had to be their best
 - They knew what was expected
 - Their worship was the overflow of their hearts
 - Abel’s worship was accepted and Cains was not.
 - We all know how this turns out.
 - Cain murders Abel.
 - **Process that thought for a second.**
 - The 1st murder in human history was motivated by **half-hearted religion.**
 - ***Half-hearted religion is defiled religion***

So, what does pure and undefiled religion look like?

- James was hoping you would ask

James 1:27

²⁷ Pure and undefiled **religion** before our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

- James says pure and undefiled “**ceremonial observance that honors God**” is when we visit orphans and take care of widows.
 - In other words, pure and undefiled religion motivates the child of God to **love others** particularly those who cannot help themselves.
 - Our faith and love, motivates or compels us to action.

- **Thus we become doers of the Word.**
- **The second part of undefiled religion** before God is when we keep ourselves unstained by the world.
 - We do this because we are compelled or motivated by Gods love for us to separate ourselves from sin because that is what He has done.
 - Our love and understanding of Him is that our sin (even as Christians) separates us from Him.
 - This is why we must keep ourselves unstained by the world.

So, what does “unstained” mean?

- “without spot”
 - ***The command is “keep oneself unstained by the world.”***
 - ***How do we do this Pastor?***
 - How do we work, live, and play in a world that is covered in the stain of sin and not get any spots on us?
 - **Hebrews 12** “fix your eyes on Jesus”
 - **Pray for a sensitivity to The Holy Spirit**
 - He will make you sensitive to sin
 - ***Get into Gods word!***

We must also understand that there is a need for a daily cleansing:

- Jesus demonstrated this the night before His crucifixion

John 13:1-11

13 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

⁸ Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!"

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, because he is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

- *Why would Jesus say it that way?* "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, because he is completely clean;"

- Jesus was demonstrating how it would be for those whom He died for.
 - Yes, they were eternally clean but due to the world that we **walk in, witness in, and minister in**, we would need a daily cleansing of the feet.
 - Symbolically, Jesus is saying that all of your sins are washed away but make no mistake about it you are going to get dirty.
 - ***You are going to need a daily washing.***

The Apostle John wrote these words under the power of the Holy Spirit in 1 John 1

1 John 1:9

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So, we see that we need a daily cleansing that comes through confession and repentance.

- If we confess, He will forgive and cleanse us from unrighteousness.

Back to James

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Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

What have we learned today?

- The **deceived man** claims Christ and even **appears to be religious** but the **overflow of his heart** is expressed by what he says and ultimately determines his actions.
 - If he claims Christ through religious ceremony and does not control his tongue, **he is a liar**.
 - For the overflow of man's heart will spill out of his mouth.
 - For **the tongue is a small flame** that can set worlds on fire bringing destruction to that person and all that are near them.
- **God determines how He will be worshiped**
 - Cain and Abel would agree
 - God has said that our worship is more than going to church
 - More than reading the word
 - More than praying
 - It is all of those things combined that compel the child of God into action.
 - These actions are motivated by our love for the Father and the fruit of that love is put on display by how we:

- take care of each other particularly those in great need like widows and orphans.
- And how we separate ourselves from sin.