

James

Anger In Relation To Hardship

August 7, 2011

I. Introduction

A. **James 1:16-21** . . . Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. [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. [18] In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. [19] This you know, 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.

B. Prayer

II. Anger In Relation To Trials, Tribulation, Temptation, and Fleshly Desires

A. **James 1:19a** . . . This you [already] know, my beloved brethren.

1. At first reading, it seems as if this statement about already knowing something is introducing a new thought – and this new thought has to do with advice about ungodly anger.
2. Now the topic of ungodly anger is always an important topic because the weakness for such anger afflicts us all – if not on a regular, recurring basis, than at least now and then.
3. However, if we ask the question: “What is it we already know?” it seems the answer can easily take in more than the subject of ungodly anger. In fact, I think it can cover what God says from the beginning of **verse 2** of this chapter through at least the end of **verse 25**.
4. So since I am taking this larger view of the statement “This you [already] know, my beloved brethren,” I want to remind us what it is God has told us and will tell us which we already know.
 - a. We know that trials and tribulation are our friend, sent or allowed by God, to build our faith and strengthen our resolve to persevere in remaining faithful to God through hard times after hard times, so that we grow in Christian perfection.
 - b. We know that God will generously give us whatever amount of wisdom we ask for in order to think the right things, make the

right choices, and behave the right way in the midst of trials or tribulation.

- c. We know that hard times should be seen by the financially impoverished Christian as an honor – even though they are already enduring the pains of poverty – because it means God has counted them worthy of such suffering.
 - d. We know that hard times should be seen by richer Christians as an opportunity to be humbled, for trials and tribulation remind the rich that their wealth and possessions are fleeting and therefore not to be trusted in.
 - e. We know that God gives the crown of life to those who remain faithful to Him through trial after trial and time of suffering after time of suffering.
 - f. We know that God is perfectly good and that our trials and tribulations are loving gifts from Him intended to work a mighty spiritual and eternal good in us.
 - g. We know that even though we suffer in this life, God has created us and saved us with the intention of exalting us to the highest position among His creatures – now and throughout eternity.
 - h. And, skipping down to **verses 22-25**, we know that knowing the truth is not enough. We must add appropriate action in accordance with the truth we know for the truth to have its intended affect in us, on us, and in all we do.
5. Therefore, my recommendation is see these words “This you [already] know, my beloved brethren,” in this larger context because it is one of the statements that ties this chapter together and helps us see how the individual parts are related to the whole.

B. **James 1:19b** . . . But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

- 1. Notice how many of us this exhortation is addressed to: **EVERYONE!** And God does not say it is best to be, or it is wise to be, or it would be better if we were quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. God says **EVERYONE MUST** be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. This is the standard set before us by God. He is the one requiring this of us – which means He knows we can live up to this standard. Now we may fail at this, on occasion, until we die. However, the born again Christian has this standard set in his mind and his goal is to reach it now, and if not now, soon, and if not soon, than before he goes from earth to heaven.

2. The context of these words begins with “Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials.” With this context in mind, I want to ask: “When are we most often prone to get frustrated, annoyed, irritated, peeved, resentful, or as it says here in **verse 19**, angry?”
 - a. Is it not when things do not work out as we want, or when difficult situations mess up our plans, or when those we expect to love us do not love us as we expect? Is it not when we are looking forward to the ease and comfort and happiness that goes along with a trouble-free life, and then trouble strikes?
 - b. You see, in relation to trials and tribulations:
 - (1) We are prone to get irritated when times get tougher than they already are, or when faced with another trial or time of suffering that comes on the heels of our last difficult situation.
 - (2) We are prone to get riled up when the choices and behavior of others – especially those dear or near – make our life more difficult or deny us some pleasure or longed for comfort.
 - (3) We are prone to get cranky when we miss out on something we had our heart set on.
 - (4) We are prone to get upset or contentious when the unexpected happens, and the unexpected is not what we want – such as a fender bender or a new boss who is difficult to work for.
 - (5) We are prone to get angry when we grow tired and discouraged in the midst of hard times and simply want relief of some kind.
 - c. Before moving on, let's take a moment to reflect on what I have just pointed out about anger in relation to trials and tribulation.
 - (1) We are Christians who claim we believe in the goodness of God, and we support the idea of growing to Christian maturity. Some of us even say we long to be holy just as God is holy.
 - (2) Yet we too easily and too often give way to ungodly anger – in some form or another. And what do we get angry about? When examined with spiritual eyes, it turns out that many of the things we get angry over are things God intends or allows for our good.
 - (3) And why do we get angry over things that God intends for our good? Partly because we are prone to see trials and tribulation as unwanted intrusions or as thieves who steal our happy life, rather than seeing them as loving gifts from

our all-wise God who is using them to make us fit for His eternal kingdom. And partly because we still value things that are cheap, gaudy, self-gratifying, temporal, and from an eternal perspective – worthless.

3. So rather than getting angry over things we ought not be angry over, what are we to do in these situations: God says we must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

a. **Quick to hear:**

- (1) Listen for what God has to say:
 - (a) When trials and tribulation tempt you toward anger, seek to know the mind of God as to what He is doing and why He is doing it. For example, review and contemplate **James 1:2-4**.
 - (b) Listen for any convicting words from the Holy Spirit. If he is speaking, listen and respond accordingly.
 - (c) Humbly and patiently spend time asking God to make it clear to you what His intentions or will is in the matter.
 - (d) Look at God's word, especially His dealings with Israel and exhortations in both Testaments, to see if there is something there that can give you insight and understanding in to why God is doing or allowing a particular hard time to come upon you.
 - (e) Seek advice from a godly, and preferably older person.
- (2) Listen to what others are trying to tell you – even if it is through threats or criticism or angry words.
 - (a) Listen to understand the message someone is trying to convey. To do this, you will have to focus on the message rather than the way the message is being given.
 - (b) Listen to understand – as best you can – what is going on, so as to learn why a particular person seems so intent on making your life harder. Listen to gain insight into their circumstances, their fears or concerns, their values and way of thinking, and their commitment to godliness.
 - (c) Listen to and consider the advice others are offering – even if you do not like it or decide to reject it after hearing and understanding it.
 - (d) **In other words, be an investigator first, than take on the role of judge if necessary.**
- (3) Waiting to speak until we hear as much of what God is trying to say to us; or waiting to speak until we hear as much as

possible concerning the story or explanation from those hurting us, gives us an opportunity to more accurately assess the situation and choose a godly response.

- (4) When listening, bear in mind that it is likely that God is doing far more for us, to us, and in us than we even begin to realize – just as good parents are parenting and influencing their children toward maturity far more often than the average child realizes.

b. **Slow to speak:**

- (1) When we are angry, quick words are often unkind, unnecessarily hurtful, self-serving, self-protective, self-justifying, sarcastic, derogatory, disrespectful, and unfairly condemning. This is true in what we say about God as well as what we say about others or to others during times of anger.
- (2) Slowing down our mouth so as to make time for our mind and for our conscience and for the word of God that we have hidden in our hearts to have their rightful influence greatly improves the probability of saying and doing what is godly.
- (3) **Proverbs 10:19** . . . When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.
- (4) **Proverbs 17:27-28** . . . He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. [28] Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

c. **Slow to anger:**

- (1) **Proverbs 16:32** . . . He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.
- (2) Why does God warn us to be cautious and careful with anger? Because human anger – especially when it an immediate response or our first response – is too easily turned into ungodly anger.
- (3) To get a scriptural picture of why ungodly anger is ungodly, let's look at several statements about anger from the New Testament.
 - (a) Christ links anger with murder. In **Matthew 5:21-22**, He said that ungodly anger is equal to murder in that it turns us against our fellow man to the point of severely damaging, if not destroying, relationships.

- (b) **II Corinthians 12:20-21** . . . For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be **strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes**, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; [21] I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.
 - (c) **Galatians 5:19-21** . . . Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, **enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes**, dissensions, factions, [21] envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 - (d) **Ephesians 4:31-32** . . . Let all **bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor** and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
 - (e) **Colossians 3:8** . . . But now you also, put them all aside: **anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech** from your mouth.
- 4. Christ, our example of meekness and humility – quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger – in the face of trials, persecution, suffering, and injustice.
 - a. **I Peter 2:21-24** . . . For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, [22] who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; [23] and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; [24] and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.
 - b. **Romans 12:17-21** . . . Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. [19] Never take

your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. [20] "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." [21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- C. The reason ungodly anger is ungodly: **James 1:20** . . . for the anger of man does not achieve (to bring about or accomplish) the righteousness of God.
1. Ungodly anger is nothing like God's anger. In fact, it is, in its own way, the opposite of God's anger and the enemy of God's justice.
 - a. God's anger is righteous, just, fair, and impartial.
 - b. Our ungodly anger is unrighteous, unjust, unfair, and partial.
 - c. It seems as if our anger drives us to
 2. To make my point about the unjustness and partiality of our ungodly anger, let me ask four questions:
 - a. Which one of us gets as angry over our own foolishness or carelessness or displays of immaturity or failure to take responsibility for wrongs done or evil intentions or selfishness or pride or sinfulness as we do over the misdeeds, failures, and sinfulness of others?
 - b. How can we be righteous or fair when we become frustrated and angry over the misbehavior of others while tolerating or defending or ignoring or even denying our own wrong doing?
 - c. Which one of us feels as much anger over the evil that is done to those we don't know as we feel over the unkind or frustrating or hurtful or evil things that are done to us, or to those we love and care about?
 - d. Is it possible for those of us who are partial to impartially apply justice so that we honor God and His righteous justice in thought, word, and deed?
 3. If you will answer these questions honestly, I believe you will gain a greater clarity as to why it is impossible for ungodly anger to achieve the righteousness of God.

III. Conclusion