

JAMES 1:18-21

You've probably heard the old saying that "God gave us one mouth and two ears so that we'd listen more than we talk."

Well today we see the basis for that idea.

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be ^{is}a kind of first fruits ^{is}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* ^{is}that remains of wickedness, in ^{is}humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

NEWS ALERT: What we see is that Christians struggle with sin, even serious sin. Does that surprise you? It shouldn't, if you know your own heart.

EX Rayburn – Christians are like spiritual plumbers – we must be concerned with the flow of fresh water coming into our lives as we also deal with what is flowing in the sewer of our hearts and mouths.

If we take the grace and provisions of god for granted, then we might easily lose sight of the need for the pure water of the Word to be coming into the system. When that happens, our spiritual pipes get clogged with the sewage of our lives. As a young believer one of the first verses I memorized was 1 Jn 1:9, "if we confess our sin He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I was told that this is the Christians "bar of soap."

I would add that it is also our bottle of Drano- it's one way to unclog the pipes. James is telling us that we will know that our pipes are blocked when we see the sludge of anger, pride, an unbridled tongue, filthiness and wickedness

James begins with the reality that a big part of the sewage issue is that pride makes us talkers, not listeners. We are apt to talk at people rather than with them.

We all suffer THREE DELUSIONS – STEVEN SAMPLE – THE CONTRARIANS GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP

- HE/SHE IS A GOOD DRIVER
- He/she has a good sense of humor
- He/she is a good listener

James assumes his audience suffers from the same delusion. Not caring for each other by humbling listening during trials. James is concerned for how this impacts relationships. Symptom of a deeper concern – NOT humbly listening to God speak through His Word. That is the real foundational issue.

v. 19 Let EVERY PERSON be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. This is for EACH OF US. James is making eye contact with his audience. This is great advice for marriage and parenting. If "Christians " just practiced that verse, the world would be attracted to the gospel- what a practical way to be salt and light

EX: last week someone said "I was just waiting for you to call my name out loud as you spoke about anger"

James gets quite personal. He goes from preaching to meddling with our hearts.

When it comes to these verses you may feel like this – from Superdrag (Industry Giants)

Slow to speak, slow to anger

**The opposite of how I feel The opposite of how I live
There's no justice in this deal Something infinitely greater**

James introduces the theme of the tongue, which he deals with in all five chapters. James exposes what our speech implies about our hearts. If this command were applied, the tone and content of

conversations and posts on social media would change **DRAMATICALLY**. If it were applied **ONLY BY PROFESSED CHRISTIANS**, it would change dramatically.

Let me paraphrase James for the 21st century: “let everyone be quick to hear, slow to hit SEND, and slow to anger.”

Untold damage is done to the church, to relationships, and the world when this command is ignored.

Think of how many marriages and families would be enriched if these verses were followed. Memorize them and meditate on them.

These verses are particularly needed in times of trials because in trials we are tempted to do the opposite of what James commands.

There is a lot of talk about the anger and hostility that is above the surface in our society today. There certainly is truth to that. **BUT** as one who listens to a fair amount of history podcasts, it’s not really unique to our age. What makes it so pronounced is the technology of the internet.

EX: If Luther and his opponents had had the internet 500 years ago, we might look pretty tame today.

Back then disagreement with the established order might mean death – being burned alive.

EX: There are some Hamilton fans in the room or watching online and you know how heated the debates became in the public square when there was **NO** electronic media. Imagine the FB or twitter feed between Hamilton and Burr or Hamilton and Jefferson, etc. Hamilton was killed in a duel by the sitting VP of the United States.

The way of the world, and too often of the church, over the years has **ALWAYS** been, “Let everyone be slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to anger.”

James is writing to implore his beloved brethren and sistren to change that cultural norm. His words ring in our ears today as well.

Trials **TEND** to provoke quick speech and slow listening, **SO WE** need to be on the alert during trials.

Being slow to speak guards against relational temptation and sin.

Back in 2018 many of the **CROSS** groups did the “Eulogy” exercise, i.e. “What would you like to hear people say about you at your funeral?”

How about this...”He / she was quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger”.

Would those who know you best say that about you, or me?

That would be something that could only be explained by the Holy Spirit.

When you encounter these verses or the ones earlier v.2-4 “count it all joy...” Is your first reaction one that says, “Lord, I need your grace to make that real in my life” or is it to try and negotiate with God as to why His commands shouldn’t apply in your specific situation?

God is not asking us to do something that He doesn’t do: Psalm 103 v. 8-12

The LORD is compassionate and gracious,

Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness....

So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him....

¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame;

He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

If God can treat us that way, how should we treat each other?

“Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” is a description of God Himself.

1 Pet 2:21-23; 3:8-9

The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

There is righteous anger, but most of us, me included, don't have enough experience with it to comment on it.

Motyer:

"General human anger is heavily impregnated with sin: self-importance, self-assertion, intolerance, stubbornness. When anger comes in, listening flies out."

That anger doesn't serve anyone.

Can you think of a situation where you really helped someone through the expression of unrighteous anger?

Anger corrodes the box that contains it. – Socrates??

If you "need" to express your anger, then do it toward God because ultimately, He's the one you are mad at.

When you honk your horn in anger at another driver, you're really honking at God.

Anger is a deeply theological issue. At the root of our anger is a sense that "I deserve better. That should not have happened to me. How dare they? Don't they know who I am?"

Anger is released when we try to defend our pride, our agenda, our desire or our reputation. Those are the things that sent Jesus to the cross.

Friends, "they" may not know who we are or what we deserve, but God does. He knows that we deserve death and hell, and yet while we were helpless sinners, He sent His Son to die for us. Remember that everything this side of hell is GRACE.

We get angry to the extent that we forget or deny what we really deserve. We forget that we are bigger sinners than we dare admit. We forget what Edwards realized long ago.

Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.

v. 19-20 show what maturity or being "perfect/complete" looks like

We fulfill the commands of v. 19 by listening to and receiving the Word.

James commands Two intentional acts v. 21

- **Rejection of sin- all filthiness.** The doctrine and danger of sin is well pronounced in this letter. He never softens his language on sin. We must learn to identify the various habits and manifestations of sin in our lives.

PUT AWAY all filthiness and abundance of evil.

James has opened the door for us to understand the patterns of sin in general, but it is up to us to do the work of identifying OUR particular struggles with sin. We're all different. We must be willing to do some soul-searching work in this area.

SO, WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC ISSUES WHERE YOU STRUGGLE? (going from preaching to meddling)

WCF: confess particular sins particularly

TIP: You will never find "victory" in any area until you get it into the light by telling at least one other person. Gal 6 – 'bear one another's burdens" "James 5 "confess your sins to one another

5:19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Clearing away all known sin is a way to clear the path for the reception of the Word. **We can't humbly receive the Word if we are guarding and fondling sin in our hearts.**

- **Reception of God's Word**

James is laying out for us what it looks like to live as a follower of Jesus, as one who has the word implanted in us. All of the resources of god are at our disposal in our battle with sin, but the catalyst is the Word.

Psalm 119:11 – Thy word I have treasured in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.

James doesn't give a bible reading plan because there was no Bible as we know it. There was the OT but few had access to a full copy. It would have to be memorized. James draws attention to what is most important, i.e. a humble attentive spirit

How did the Word become implanted? V. 18 – by His own will. This speaks of the miracle of regeneration. The Word of god is not native to the natural heart. God gives new birth by which the word is implanted. It is this work of god that inclines our hearts to the Word

1 Peter 2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. **2** Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, **3** now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Ignoring the Word is more dangerous than you think because you become vulnerable to all of the temptations and sins that come along with trials in life. Do you know where it usually shows up? IN YOUR SPEECH or your social media posts – in terms of content and tone. To gain self-awareness ask yourself, “Is it biblically true and does it reflect a desire to listen, or does it mainly reflect personal feelings, fears, and condemnation of others?”

God gives the new heart AND we are to crave pure spiritual milk so that we may grow up in our salvation. The craving is not automatic because our desire for the pure Word can be squelched if we feed our souls on other things.

This VOV prayer, Contentment, offers a more theologically worded understanding than the Beach Boys in Help Me Rhonda – but they make a similar point. We can't just say “no” to sin; we must replace it with something better, something of greater value – Jesus, not our own righteousness

**When thy Son, Jesus, came into my soul
instead of sin, He became more dear to me
than sin had formerly been;
His kindly rule replaced sin's tyranny.
Teach me to believe that if ever I would have any sin subdued
I must not only labor to overcome it,
but must invite Christ to abide in the place of it,
and He must become to me more than vile lust had been;
that His sweetness, power, life may be there.
Thus I must seek a grace from Him contrary to sin,
but must not claim it apart from Himself.**

(Do you pray like that? I don't. That's why I use VOV)

COME TO THE TABLE -

Invite Christ to abide in your heart in the place of any sin that is disturbing your soul.

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