

JAMES 1:19-21

- 19 *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone 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.

INTRO

It has been well said: actions are controllable, thoughts less so, but reactions are the most difficult to control.

Examples: 1. An opinion is voiced with which you sharply disagree. Quick, react!
2. An affront to your sense of what is right occurs. Quick, react!
3. A reproof of your character is given. Quick, react!

I wonder if James is thinking about times when he saw Jesus react to a carpenter shop customer who was less than kind. Or if he is remembering Jesus react to countless unjust accusations by himself and his other siblings. Or maybe James is remembering Jesus' reaction before the Sanhedrin.

In all cases, he would be remembering a response that was SPIRITUALLY MATURE, showing CONFIDENCE IN REACTION.

Reaction Principles

A. WHAT COMES OUT IS WHAT IS INSIDE. If the fruit of the Spirit comes out (love, joy, peace, self-control...) then God is in control. If "yogurt" comes out, then God is in control.

B. REACTIONS ARE BEST PREPARED FOR AHEAD OF TIME. Expect to be tested. "Be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 5:18)

C. QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK and SLOW TO ANGER

We would all agree to this wisdom in concept – but easier said than done!

Vs. 19 - Note that James begins by acknowledging this is something we all know well ("this you know") – and yet we need reminding until we get it right.

The "natural" or ungodly reaction is: hear but not listen, speak with little or no thought and let yourself get understandably angry. But, this is NOT a SPIRITUALLY MATURE response!

Proverbs is the OT James, as James is the NT Proverbs. Let's hear what Proverbs has to say about these HEARING, SPEAKING and ANGER in reactions.

QUICK TO HEAR

"we have been given 2 ears and 1 tongue (guarded by 2 lips and many teeth"

Proverbs 12: 15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a **wise** man is he who listens to counsel.

Proverbs 15: 31 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the **wise**.

Proverbs 19: 20 Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be **wise** the rest of your days.

Proverbs 25: 11-12 *Like* apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances. *Like* an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

Re: LISTENING TO GOD:

Proverbs 8: 32-34 Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways. Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. **Blessed** is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts.

Ecclesiastes 5: 1 Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth, therefore let your words be few.

Summary

1. When God speaks, we are both WISE and BLESSED if we LISTEN and HEED.
2. Moreover, we are wise to SEEK and DRAW NEAR to His words of wisdom
3. We must discern a WISE REPROVER and COUNSELOR. We must LISTEN and HEED. To do so is WISE – to not do so is be a FOOL.
4. There is something to be learned in all counsel and criticism.

SLOW TO SPEAK

Proverbs 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is **wise**.

Proverbs 12: 18 There is one who speaks rashly, like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the **wise** brings healing.

Proverbs 17: 27-28 He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of **understanding**. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered **wise**; when he closes his lips, he is *counted prudent*.

Proverbs 29: 20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Summary

1. **Restrain your words until you have a cool spirit. “Think before you speak”**
2. **Hasty and rash words that are many bring certain TRANSGRESSION**
3. **Words can HURT or HEAL – choose wisely**

SLOW TO ANGER

Proverbs 12: 16 A fool’s vexation is known at once, but a **prudent** man conceals dishonor.

Proverbs 14: 29 He who is slow to anger has **great understanding**, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.

Proverbs 15: 1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15: 18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger pacifies contention.

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.

Proverbs 19: 11 A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Proverbs 25: 28 *Like* a city that is broken into *and* without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.

Proverbs 29: 11 A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back.

Proverbs 29: 22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.

Proverbs 7: 9 Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools.

Ephesians 4: 26-27 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Summary

1. **Hold and hide your opinion/reaction until you are sure it is Godly**
2. **ANGER almost always brings SIN Hide it, stuff it, control it, release it.**

3. ANGER triggers an angry response. GENTLENESS stills anger.

4. Never let ANGER FESTER – talk it out as soon as possible

v. 20 Man's anger is not the road to God's pleasure. ("does not achieve the righteousness of God")

v. 21 This verse speaks of how we can PREPARE for positive reactions.

1. Since it is my SINFULNESS that produces reactions of ANGER – get rid of the sinfulness – item by item. As the Spirit controls, and not myself, my anger will be in control. *Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*
2. Humble myself to know that my angry reactions are not pleasing to God.
3. Cultivate the Word of God planted in my life that I might be VICTORIOUS and CONFIDENT in reactions
4. CELEBRATE positive reactions

JAMES 1: 19-21 (My Paraphrase) Confidence in Reaction

19-20. Now I'm going to tell you something you already know, but you must apply it to your reactions. One, be quick to listen to others and especially to God. Two, be slow to voice your opinion. And three, put any tendency to anger on a slow fuse. Pleasing God and getting angry never go well together. The short version: open your ears, close your mouth and chill your anger.

21. You know all that leftover filth of the old life that's still seeps out? Dump it in the spiritual trash can. You know God's Word that He has planted deep inside of you? Humbly receive its wisdom and let it save you from drowning in your own foolish reactions.

James 1: 1-18 in review (My paraphrase)

1. To my Jewish brothers of all twelve tribes, wherever you might be after having been forced out of your homeland – this letter is from James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, by calling and by choice. Dear brothers:

Confidence in Trials

2-4. Take a different perspective at the many trials you face, seeing the positive in them, rather than the negative. One, your faith is being proven and strengthened. And two, you are developing endurance for the long haul of life. Don't balk at being tested, but hang in there, letting the tests accomplish their Godly purpose: your maturity, that you may be spiritually "buff" without flabbiness or weakness of character.

5. Remember, if you need wisdom (and who doesn't?), just ask God, who gives it abundantly and without making you feel bad for asking. Just ask, and Godly wisdom will indeed be given to you.

6-8. But you have to ask really believing the answer will come. No doubting allowed! Because if you doubt, you are acting just like the waves of the sea blown around by the wind – up one minute with your belief and down the next with your doubts. This kind of supposed “faith” won't get you anything from God. He doesn't accept on-again, off-again faith, which by the way, indicates instability in other areas of life.

Confidence in Status

9-10. Hey, believing brother - how about this for God's “upside down” perspective on wisdom? If your earthly status is on the “humble” side, be proud that you are standing rich and tall in God's spiritual kingdom. And if your earthly status is on the “well off” side, be proud that in God's kingdom you are just a spiritual beggar. After all, your earthly status is about as secure as flowering grass in the heat of the sun.

11. See the picture? Just like the sun rises, so does your status. Then comes the “Santa Annas” of life – and just like the grass withers and the flower falls, so does your status wither and fall. What once appeared beautiful is no more. Our status, and the futile pursuits of achieving it, will soon fade away.

12. So what's worth achieving? - persevering through the trials of life and proving your Godly character through it all. This is how you will receive the true “crown of life” – God's heavenly reward – which He promises to each one of His lovers.

Confidence in Temptation

13-16. I don't ever want to hear you say, “I am being tempted by God.” One, evil can never tempt a perfect God. And two, a perfect God could never lower Himself to tempt any one. Rather, it's really you that brings on temptation by your own luring lustfulness. Sin comes when you give in to temptation and act on your lust. And when that sin gets full sway in your life it kills your relationship with God. My dearly beloved, believing friends - don't be sucked in by temptation!

17. Everything that is good is a perfect gift, especially given to you from God. “Good” is never by accident. The Giver is always our Heavenly Father, and like a bright light he never wavers or compromises in His delivery of good.

18. God exercised His Divine prerogative when He chose to pull us into truth by the power of His Word. This was so that we Jewish believers could be considered as the first ones to receive His special blessing of spiritual victory.