

The unfolding of your words gives light.

Faith That Works

An Exposition of the Book of James

¹⁹This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear^a, slow to speak^b and slow to anger^c; ²⁰for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God^{a,b}.

^a 1:19 **This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear.** The word “quick” is used in contrast to the word “slow.” It was used by John of his own speed in reaching the empty tomb “faster” than Peter (20:4). The word translated “hear” means simply “to hear,” but in context carries more than just the idea of a passive hearing (as you would listen to the drone of a distant lawn mower on a summer day). It is used in Matthew 12:42 of the Queen of the South coming to “hear” Solomon. In Matthew 13:9-43 it is used several times in a parable about responding to God’s word. In Luke 16:29 and 31 it is used of the brothers of the doomed rich man refusing to “hear” or “listen” to “Moses” (Scripture). This is the idea James has in mind: you should sprint to give others your attention.

^b 1:19 **slow to speak.** The word “slow” stands in contrast to “quick” in this verse. The only other place the word translated “slow” is used in the New Testament is in Luke 24:25 when Jesus told the Emmaus disciples that they were foolish and “slow” to believe the scriptural prophecies about the suffering of Messiah. They just didn’t get it. To be slow to speak, however, does not mean you are an imbecile. It means you are relationally restrained, and that is wise. Holding your tongue is being neighbor-loving (more on that in James 3). Instead of blurting out what is in your heart you should weigh what you are going to say or whether you will even open your mouth. James looks like the book of Proverbs again here because of all the exhortations in Proverbs about self-restraint, particularly with the tongue. For instance, just as James calls us to be slow to speak, Proverbs exhorts us, “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19), “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him” (Proverbs 18:13) and “A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back” (Proverbs 29:11).

^c 1:19 **slow to anger.** The word “anger” used here commonly translated “wrath” in the NASB.

- “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the **wrath** to come?’” (Matt. 3:7)
- “After looking around at them with **anger**, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.” (Mark 3:5)
- “So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the **wrath** to come?’” (Luke 3:7)
- “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and **wrath** to this people” (Luke 21:23)
- “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the **wrath** of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)
- “For the **wrath** of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” (Romans 1:18)
- “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of **wrath** and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” (Romans 2:5)
- “but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, **wrath** and indignation.” (Romans 2:8)

James 1.19-20
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

©Rice Lake Baptist Church, 104 East Barker Street, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 54868 – <http://www.ricelakebaptist.org> – 715.234.1966

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and that you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.
Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.



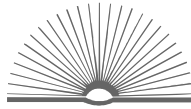
The unfolding of your words gives light.

- “But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts **wrath** is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)” (Romans 3:5)
- “for the Law brings about **wrath**, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.” (Romans 4:15)
- “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the **wrath** of God through Him.” (Romans 5:9)
- “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His **wrath** and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of **wrath** prepared for destruction?” (Romans 9:22)
- “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.” (Romans 12:19)
- “for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings **wrath** on the one who practices evil.” (Romans 13:4)
- “Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of **wrath**, but also for conscience’ sake.” (Romans 13:5)
- “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of **wrath**, even as the rest.” (Ephesians 2:3)
- “Let all bitterness and **wrath** and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” (Ephesians 4:31)
- “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the **wrath** of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 5:6)
- “For it is because of these things that the **wrath** of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,” (Colossians 3:6)
- “But now you also, put them all aside: anger, **wrath**, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.” (Colossians 3:8)
- “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the **wrath** to come.” (1 Thessalonians 1:10)
- “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But **wrath** has come upon them to the utmost.” (1 Thessalonians 2:16)
- “For God has not destined us for **wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)
- “Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without **wrath** and dissension.” (1 Timothy 2:8)
- “AS I SWORE IN MY **WRATH**, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’” (Hebrews 3:11)
- “For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, ‘AS I SWORE IN MY **WRATH**, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,’ although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Hebrews 4:3)
- “This you know, my beloved brethren But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to **anger**,” (James 1:19)
- “for the **anger** of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20)
- “and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the **wrath** of the Lamb;” (Revelation 6:16)
- “for the great day of their **wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17)
- “And the nations were enraged, and Your **wrath** came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and

James 1:19-20
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

©Rice Lake Baptist Church, 104 East Barker Street, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 54868 – <http://www.ricelakebaptist.org> – 715.234.1966

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and that you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.
Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.



The unfolding of your words gives light.

-
- those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.” (Revelation 11:18)
- “he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His **anger**; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” (Revelation 14:10)
 - “The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce **wrath**.” (Revelation 16:19)
 - “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce **wrath** of God, the Almighty.” (Revelation 19:15)

^a 1:20 **for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.** James does not use the ordinary, general word for “man” in the phrase “anger of man.” It is the word that is almost exclusively used of a male. James is not saying that women cannot be guilty of this type of anger, but he is describing the type of rage most of us have only seen in men. Consider all the places in the New Testament where wrath is mentioned. Do you see the commonalities? The only time wrath accomplishes righteous ends is when it is God’s wrath. You can never get something good done by doing something evil.

Remember that the Lord Jesus connected anger with murder when he said:

You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. Matthew 5:21-22

In context, remember that James just told us a few verses ago that sin brings forth death. Refusing to listen is prideful. Flying off the handle is selfish. You will never be used of God as long as you are prideful and unteachable.

^b 1:19-20 James touches on human anger here for the first time in his letter. He does so in contrast to the character of God, the giver of good gifts (verse 17). Human wrath or “man-anger” is one of those desires that must be conquered before it “brings forth death.” It shows up when desire is conceived. This wrath moves us either to physical violence, fits of rage or the passive and internally destructive bitterness. How do you crush you that kind of anger?

1. Become an active listener. Value what others have to say, especially God. Do people tell you that you do not listen to them? Why is that? Before you give me an acrostic label to excuse your attention deficit, remember that you will listen to what you value. When you value looking right more than you value being good, you will find yourself in frequent conflict with others. Most conflicts start because someone goes off with limited information. Rather than working so hard at thinking up a good comeback, spend more energy on the command to consider others better than yourself. The maxim, “Seek to understand before trying to be understood” is a biblical maxim.
2. Don’t say it. Remember that keeping your mouth closed honors the people around you. Rather than thinking of the next thing you are going to say, curb the desire to get the last word.
3. Direct your passion toward God-pleasing activity. Remember that wrath almost never pleases God. Consider the man who comes home from work wanting nothing more than some peace and quiet after a long day. When he becomes short with his wife or harsh with his misbehaving children it is likely not because he is zealous to seek first the kingdom of God. The real reason we exhibit wrath is because we are seeking first our own kingdom.

James 1.19-20
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

©Rice Lake Baptist Church, 104 East Barker Street, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 54868 – <http://www.ricelakebaptist.org> – 715.234.1966

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and that you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.
Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.