

James - Anger in My Trial

Sign Title: Anger in My Trial

May 29, 2011

Good morning Faith Church! This morning, we are back in the book of James. Last time we were in James, we completed the first section of the book which taught us how to think about the trials and temptations we face in the Christian life. This morning, we begin a new section of James we call *Hearing and Doing*. This section moves us from what we need to know about trials and temptation to the practicalities of everyday Christian living.

Before we get to our text, I have a question for you. What makes you angry? Is it an employee? You carefully explain to them how to do their job, but they do it their own way and their mistake costs you hundreds of dollars? Does that make you angry? Do your children make you angry? You tell them to pick up their room but they conveniently ignore you until you raise your voice. When they ignore you, does that make you angry? Maybe it is a friend saying things about you behind your back. Does that betrayal make you angry? Sometimes it isn't people that make us angry, it is a situation that makes us fuming mad. We buy a house but the market crashes. Every time we write the mortgage check, we are angry because we are under water financially. Maybe it isn't your home, sometimes it is your car. I brought my truck in for a squeaking noise to one repair shop, they said it was the front brakes. After having them repaired, I drove home and it was making the same noise. I brought it to another repair shop. They said it was the back brakes. After having them repaired, I drove it home

and it was still making a squeaking noise when it drove down the road. That kind of stuff makes me angry. How about you?

When we are angry, what do we do? We let everybody know we are angry. Our words are colorful, our attitude either becomes pout-whiny or nasty. Sometimes, lets be honest, it gets much worse. We break things or throw things. Sometimes we even hurt ones we love.

While anger isn't always wrong, most of our angry outbursts are not pleasing to God. In this next section of James, we are moving from knowing the truth about trials in the Christian life to learning how to handle those trials.

James 1:19-21

In our previous studies of James, we learned that James was writing to members of his church that left the city of Jerusalem in search of a life with less persecution. Unfortunately, for most of them, life was still difficult in their new home. Many of them couldn't find work. It was economically tough. Socially, they didn't fit in. The religious atmosphere of the first century world was eclectic. People worshipped many God's and to not worship your neighbors God's was offensive. Surprisingly, Christians were considered atheists, because they worshipped *only one God*. There were also rumors that Christians engaged in cannibalism. That didn't go over well at cock-tail parties. Christian worship wasn't understood in the ancient world because it was a new thing. When people heard what happened in the Lord's Supper, where Jesus said "This is my body." and "This is my blood." Rumors began to fly.

Not making it economically, socially unaccepted and just generally misunderstood, these Christians were getting down right angry. I don't think we would be any different.

Pastor James tells them and us, if we know God is good to us, even when we don't feel it, we need to say that not just with our words, but with our attitude. In this passage, James gives us practical advice on how to handle the anger in our heart in the midst of our trials.

Be Quick to Hear

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear,... James 1:19 (ESV)

Simply put, be a good listener. When things go wrong or when people fail us, the first thing we feel like doing is opening our mouth, not opening our ears. We generally like to talk. Some of us even get paid to do it! One thing that is in short supply is listening.

This last week, I was in Connecticut for my Uncle's funeral. He was a very successful man for a good portion of his life. At one time, he was a Vice President of a bank. He was involved in pioneering forms of mortgages and financing that are commonplace in the business world today. With all those accomplishments, you would think they would be the highlights of his funeral. A few of those accomplishments were mentioned. That wasn't what he was remembered for. Do you know what people remembered? His ability to listen. He asked about people and genuinely cared enough to listen to what they had to say. He would often say, "Tell me, how are things with you?"

Listening is scarce. It is in shortest supply is when we are angry. Our first reaction is to bark orders and raise our voice, not ask questions and listen. *If God is good all the time, we need to say it with our attitude, not just our words.* So when we are angry, be quick to listen.

Be Slow to Speak

...slow to speak... James 1:19 (ESV)

Has anyone said something they regretted when they were angry? Of course. When we are angry, we give unfiltered vent to our emotions. The angrier we are, the more unwise it is to speak because that is when we say and do things we regret.

I want to let you in on a Bible teaching secret. This is true if you are a pastor, a Faith U. teacher or if you are just working with kids. When we are preparing to teach a portion of the Bible, God will help you apply his Word in your own life before he will let you apply it to the lives of others. God is always working in you, before he is working through you.

As I mentioned, last week, we were in Connecticut for my Uncle's funeral. We had a few transportation issues. It began with Monday's storms delaying our flight to Chicago. This meant we missed our next flight to Pennsylvania so we were stuck in O'Hare airport overnight. As Cindy said, "Honey, here is our trial!" The return trip was even more exciting. Because of circumstances beyond our control, we missed our departing flight and discovered our tickets were non-transferrable and non-refundable. So we needed to buy two one-way tickets. The cost of those last minute tickets were \$1,700. As my wonderful wife

reminded me, “Here is our trial!” As I was about to freak out at the ticket agent, I kept thinking of this verse which I would preach today, “Be slow to speak.” So I kept my mouth shut and walked away for a few minutes to pray and talk with Cindy. We ended up renting a car and driving all the way home.

So, when you are teaching God’s Word, remember God will begin by applying it in you before he will apply it through you. Second, when trials come our way, before we blow up, get up and walk away from the counter. Be slow to speak. Remember, that if God is good, our attitude needs to say it.

My anger will not produce the righteousness of God.

for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 1:20 (ESV)

I know some of us are wondering if it is always wrong to be angry. No, it is not always wrong to be angry. There were times Jesus was angry. God’s anger is talked about many times in the Bible. There are times when it is appropriate to be angry. It is appropriate to be angry about sin and the devastation sin produces. The problem is, 95% of our anger is not against sin, it is root in our pride. We are offended. We are inconvenienced. We are humbled and hurt. That is called *man’s anger*.

I commend to you the *digging deeper* section of this weeks Small Group Work Sheet. In that section, I have a discussion on the difference between appropriate and inappropriate anger. For now, let me just say this.

Following the promptings of our anger will not produce a life of righteousness. Our anger will not lead us to make the right decision. Following

our anger, we will do things we regret. When people look at us they will not think of Godliness. They will say, “There is somebody I *don’t* want to be like.”

A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. Proverbs 29:22 (ESV)

For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife. Proverbs 30:33 (ESV)

The New Testament is clear. A Christian characterized by anger is not being lead by the Spirit of God. We need to make a conscious effort to handle our anger.

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Colossians 3:8 (ESV)

I know some of you will say, “But when I get angry, I just can’t control myself. Rage takes over.” First of all, God will never *command us* to do something he will not *empower us* to do. When we say we can’t control our anger, we are saying God’s spirit is not in our life because we don’t have the ability to obey what God commands. If that is the case, repent of your sin and trust in Christ. Become a Christian this morning. When you do, God promises to send his Holy Spirit into your heart. God will give you the supernatural strength to obey His word and beat sin in our lives.

The other option is God’s spirit is in our heart but we are not living in dependence upon him. We give God the nod on Sunday, but live the rest of the week in our own strength. God calls us to day by day, hour by hour, ask God’s Holy Spirit for strength and wisdom. When we ask, God promises to provide.

Just as James told us two things to strive to add to our life, which are quickness of listening and slowness of speaking. He gives us two things to take

out of our life. Remember, *if God is good, all the time my attitude should reflect it.*

Don't use filthy language when I am angry.

Therefore put away all filthiness... James 1:21 (ESV)

The word translated *filthiness* in this verse means *moral filth*. It can also be translated *obscene talk*. When we are angry, most of us are not tempted to engage in *moral filth* but *obscene language* seems to come quite naturally. If you have wondered if it is acceptable to cuss someone out in your anger, here you have your answer. When we cuss others out in our anger, it is sin.

The problem is when we don't plan to cuss in our anger, we just find ourselves doing it. For example, maybe you hit your finger with the hammer while pounding a nail and out comes a string of profanity.

You say, "I wouldn't say those things if I hadn't hit my finger with a hammer." Our mouth can only speak what is in our heart. Hitting our finger with a hammer just produced enough pressure in our life to surface what is below the water line of our inner world. It is acceptable to simply scream, "Ouch." We don't have to swear.

What should we do when we cuss in our anger? Repent of our sin. Ask forgiveness from the one you cussed out. Tell ourselves *God is good, all the time and my attitude should say it.*

Get rid of revenge fantasy.

...and rampant wickedness... James 1:21 (ESV)

What is *rampant wickedness*? In the Greek, the phrase *rampant wickedness* means *evil habits of the mind*. Applying this to anger, it is talking about role playing revenge in our thoughts. Has anybody ever done that? Anybody laid in bed and had an imaginary conversation with somebody who hurt you or made you angry? In that imaginary conversation you more than got even with them. You were, stunningly brilliant and leaving them speechless.

What is wrong with these imaginary conversations? We didn't do anything wrong. We didn't say anything wrong. We just let our imagination run wild about what we would like to do and say to those with whom we are angry. Isn't it healthy to let those feelings out an imaginary way rather than a real way?

Here is the problem. What we *role play* in our mind, is only one step away from what we will *real play* in our life. The evil thinking of our mind is only one step away from fulfillment of those plans. Role playing angry responses predisposes us to follow the imaginative angry response when we have the chance in real life. Not only that, but God knows our thoughts. God is just as interested in having our thought life pleasing to God as our real life pleasing to God.

So rather than going home and watching Rambo and imaginatively role playing how we would respond because *they drew first blood*, we need a different hero. A hero who endured great suffering. He was beaten beyond recognition. A hero who had every reason to be angry with the people who hurt him, but he kept his anger under control and did not cuss them out with his



mouth or imagine destroying them in his mind. When we are angry, our hero is Jesus. Remember, *if God is good, all the time, my attitude should say it.*

As a child of God, let my attitude tell others that I believe God is good to me all the time.

...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21 (ESV)

There is a lot in this verse, but this morning I want to focus on only one word. The word *meekness*. What does it mean to receive something with *meekness*? It means *to accept God's dealings with us as good*. Rather than being angry in the trials we face, we accept them as being allowed by the good hand of God for his glory and our good.

This morning, many of us are facing trials. If you are not in a trial, it is just a matter of time until you will be. What is your attitude? We can say with our words that God is good but if our trial lead us to be driven to angry outbursts, people will believe our attitude before they believe our words.

Conclusion

Howard Hendricks tells of visiting a leprosy colony in India. The morning he arrived, the residents were gathered for a Christian worship service. A woman with leprosy hobbled to the platform. Hendrick said that even though she was partially blind and badly disfigured, raising both of her nearly fingerless hands toward heaven said in a clear voice, "I want to praise God that I'm a leper. It was through my leprosy but I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior. I would rather be a leper who knows Jesus than completely whole and a stranger to his grace."

She was in a trial that is much worse than almost anything we will face. People believed what she said about Jesus because her attitude spoke clearer than anything she said.

God is good, all the time, and my attitude should say it.



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