

# Quick To Hear

James 1:19-21

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

As we begin to examine the words of today's passage, may we keep in mind that each of these scriptures we have been studying thus far here in the Book of James are all very closely knit together. For that reason, I want to keep calling back to mind the things we have learned in previous messages.

And that is especially so considering the words given in verse 18. Those words, it is 18 Of his (of God's) own will he brought us forth, (He begat us) by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18 (ESV))

To say that God wants you and me to have more than just a cursory knowledge of Him, truly is an understatement. He wants you and me to know Him, and to know Him intimately, to know His Character and to know His precepts. It is only then that the relationship we have with Him will be able to grow and mature into all that He desires it to be.

Here in these words, we are told that, in our salvation, we have been "begotten of God", that God "begat us", that it was of His Will, not ours, that we have been "born again" into a whole new "being" and "person", and born into His family, becoming "firstfruits", just like His Son, the Lord Jesus. Think about that for a moment, we are "sons", like Jesus, "sons of God", and co-heirs with Christ". Those words, first in 1 Corinthians 15.

20 . . . Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

And then,

23 . . . each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23 (ESV))

And then listen especially to these words in Romans 8,

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 . . . you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if

children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:14-17 (ESV))

This is a reality folks! This is not just hyperbole or exaggeration, it is real. Very real!

And no, we don't, as some foolish preachers preach, become "divinity" of some sort. That is not only foolish, it is heresy. But we do become "sons of God", which carries with it benefits and blessings far beyond anything we could ever hope or imagine.

And knowing this to be true, our cry ought to continually be, "thank you Lord. Thank you, thank you! I did nothing of my own Will or character to deserve to be your beloved "son", but I am so very glad you chose for me to be anyway."

But then, no sooner do we begin to realize that all of this is true, that we find here in verse 19 how God has more, much more, for us as His "sons". He wants to begin immediately to move us on to the next steps in our relationship with Him, to be "conformed to the image of Christ".

Through the "faith" that He put into us during our first moment of salvation, He then begins immediately to make changes, real changes within our souls, bringing about the completion of the "good work" spoken about in Philippians 1,

6 . . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6 (NIV))

The completing work that God is speaking about here is the exact thing that the Apostle James is describing for us. We are now "sons of God", and we need to begin to show it by our character and our behavior. And God intends to wrought those real and actual changes within us, changes that will make an actual difference in the manner with which we conduct all the many activities and behaviors of our daily lives.

And He will work His Will in us just as we have been studying here in these words of James, through the intimate interaction of His "words of truth", combined with your and my faith.

Now, in saying this, and in studying these words here in today's text, may we clearly understand that God is not just working to correct some of the misbehaviors He has observed in us. He is doing that yes, but His purpose is much deeper, and much more intimately involved. This whole process that God wants to take each of us through, ever and always has to do with "His glory". Everything that He does, and consequently

everything that He wants you and me to do as His “sons” must reach for that purpose, “His glory”.

And again, He intends for “His glory” to be accomplished through a delicate interaction between His “word of truth” and “our personal responses to it”.

I realize that what I am saying here might not be especially clear at the moment, but I pray that it will become clear as we study further.

Follow along with me again as I read these words.

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

Unfortunately, for our finite minds and emotions, we find it hard to work our way past the face of a person who is standing in front of us, perhaps frustrating us or irritating us with a matter. But while that person is extremely important to God, and should also be to us, they really are not the “most important” concern for us. The simple truth is, in every circumstance, “God’s glory” is ever and always the real, most important concern for us.

Recall one of the first questions that we learned about God, “What is the chief end of man”? What is the purpose for which we were created and now exist? And the answer is, “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever”. This is a truth that cannot be ignored or forgotten or even put “second” by the ever-hyperactive nature of our souls. Everything, every detail of life, must “first” pass through the inspection lenses of God. It is not a choice that we are allowed to make, though we most often do. Everything, every detail of life absolutely will pass through the inspection lenses of God, and He will actually have something to say and do about each of those things.

And so, as we consider these, very common, very ordinary, occurrences of daily life that God has brought to us today, about “hearing” and “speaking” and especially about our not becoming “angry”, we really do have to elevate the importance of our “response” to the level that God regards it to have.

God is not saying to us, “well, now that you are a Christian, you will need to get out there and start being good and doing good things, especially being quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger!” May I assure you and me that if we understand God to be saying that to us, we are immediately bound for failure.

No, what God is saying to us really is on a whole other level, far above our self-centered understanding and approach to life. And as His “sons” we need to go to the level that He is on. We need to see and to respond to the reality that He really is intimately involved in any conversation that we are engaged in, and that He has an expectation of us, an expectation that we will “first” consider His desires and His Will, and His glory, not only for our own selves, but for the person or persons that we are engaging. And to remember that at the very same moment the Holy Spirit is ministering to our spirit, He is also busily working His “works” in that other person . . . things that you and I might have little knowledge about, things that we might never know about, but that we were invited to be a very important part of.

Note those words in verse 20, and may I repeat myself for clarity. The manner in which we engage ourselves in a conversation, our listening, our hearing, our speaking and especially any anger that might arise, has “first” to do with the “Holiness” and the “righteousness” and the “glory” of God.

So then, while we really are trying our best each day to be patient and kind and thoughtful towards other people, most of the time with very little success, because we are His “sons”, God is now also working within us urging us on towards behaviors that will accomplish His purposes.

But may I remind us clearly that the work God’s Holy Spirit is doing in us is usually very different from the work that we are doing. Too often, our efforts are still cluttered with the old kinds of personal efforts that tend to fall short. Thankfully, His efforts are powerful and Spiritual, far and beyond anything we could ever hope or imagine.

And what God is speaking into our ears is for us to stop immediately with our wasted efforts and “listen for” and “heed” His guidance.

Let me say this another way. From the very first moment of our salvation, we actually begin our new life with everything that we need for “life and godliness”. We have Christ’s righteousness imputed into our souls, and we have the “words of truth” implanted there also. Now, all we have to do is “submit”, to “surrender” our personal thoughts and efforts over to the “abiding presence” and direction of the Holy Spirit and to He leading. In Proverbs 3:5 and 6, God reminds us to

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;  
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.  
(Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV))

And then in the next verse, verse 7, He gives us the simple reminder  
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes. (Proverbs 3:7 (NKJV))

One would think that this would be a relatively easy response, but it isn't, not in the immediate moments of a conversation. But it is essential that we do it!

And we won't have to wonder about the steps we are to take. From His words of truth, such as these that we have before us today, we can know exactly what we must do. The only thing then left for us to do is to humbly give up being "wise in our own eyes", and instead, follow exactly what the Spirit of God is whispering into our ears.

And yes, our "freewill" efforts and responses are important to God. And He does want you and me to exercise our "freewill" to do "His Will". But it is an ever-so delicate mixture that must always be cautiously followed as we begin to involve our "freewill".

Here, the task for me is to "stop" my habit of thinking too quickly and coming up with quick responses. God wants me to first consider that He has put me into this special circumstance for a reason, me personally, not someone else. And that He already has an answer for me and for this other person, an excellent solution to each of our needs. And I have only to follow the direction given here in His word and to be patient and listen, first to the person in front of me, and then to the "still small voice of the Holy Spirit". And then I am guaranteed that my conversation will turn out exactly the way God wants it to turn out, and then He will be glorified.

For me, I am to be careful to "listen", "really listen", to be "quick to hear". Recall in Matthew 13, Jesus used the expression, "hearing they do not hear, seeing they do not see". This is one of our major failures both with God and with each another.

Too often, as someone comes to us and begins to explain themselves, without our first taking the time to listen to them, to "hear them out", we quickly make up our mind and begin spouting out our thoughts and opinions.

God is saying to us. "Peace", "Be still and know that I am God. I have answers for you, right answers. And all you have to do is be quiet and hear me."

19 . . . let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.  
(James 1:19 (ESV))

Here, once again, as we learned in the first few verses of this Book of James, God is exercising and testing our faith, stretching it, sometimes to its limits. And may I say very

simply, as with these instructions here in verse 19, when your faith is really real, you will begin to hear, really hear. God will make sure of that!

And also, if your faith is real, you will find yourself able to follow on through with the next step and the next, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

And again, always, the first concern is that we “do the will of God”, that we “glorify Him” with our responses and behavior. And God is very clear here in these words. Anger does not produce the righteousness of God. Verse 20,

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

There is much, much more that needs to be said on these matters, but we haven't the time today. So, hopefully, at our return, we will continue to consider them.

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))