

A. Introduction

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2. Text: 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.

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James 1:20

1. Man’s Anger vs. God’s Righteousness

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^A Proverbs 8:34

^B Proverbs 10:19

^C Mark 3:5; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:26-27, 31

^D Romans 8:29

A. Introduction

1. The Word

- a. our text today is part of a section of this book of James which is bound together by the theme of 'the word'
- b. that is, the Scriptures, as the inspired, written word of God
- c. as well, in this section, James emphasizes different aspects of the word
 - (A) last week, as we looked at verse 18, the emphasis was upon the word of the gospel – that which brings new birth to believers
 - (B) verses 19 through 22 emphasize the word as instruction that is to be received by the child of God to direct his or her life
 - (C) verses 22 through 25 emphasize the word as the command of God, that calls for obedience by the child of God
- d. and with that preamble, let us read our ...

2. Text: 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.

3. New Year's Resolutions

- a. do not seem to be in vogue as much today as they once were – indeed it would appear that since such resolutions often end in failure, and,
 - (A) one survey found that 79% of them never make it until February
 - (B) that people have just given up on the practice altogether
 - (C) which seems to be the case among Christians as well
- b. yet it seems that the framing of New Year's resolutions used to be essentially a Christian endeavour
- c. the great Puritan Bible expositor, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), wrote this resolution: 'I do in the beginning of this New Year solemnly make a fresh surrender of myself, my whole self, body, soul, and spirit, to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, covenanting and

promising, not in any strength of my own, for I am very weak, but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, that I will endeavour this year to stand complete in the Will of God.' ^{2}.

d. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the New England preacher present at the Great Awakening that swept that region, wrote 90 resolutions in his diary, of which the following are two: ^{3}.

(A) Resolved, never to do anything (in) which I despise or think meanly of another.

(B) Resolved: that all men should live for the glory of God. Resolved second: that whether others do or not, I will.

e. and, a young man of twenty wrote these words of resolution in 1849:

(A) 'I do promise, my God helping:

(B) 'Firstly, that I will rise every morning sufficiently early (say twenty minutes before seven o'clock) to wash, dress, and have a few minutes, not less than five, in private prayer.

(C) 'Secondly, that I will, as much as possible, avoid all that babbling and idle talk in which I have lately so sinfully indulged.

(D) 'Thirdly, that I will endeavour in my conduct and deportment before the world and my fellow servants especially to conduct myself as a humble, meek and zealous follower of the bleeding Lamb, and, by serious conversation and warning, endeavour to lead them to think of their immortal souls.

(E) 'Fourthly, that I will not read less than four chapters in God's word every day.

(F) 'Fifthly, that I will strive to live closer to God, and to seek after holiness of heart, and leave providential events with God.

(G) 'Sixthly, that I will read this over every day or at least twice a week. God help me, enable me to cultivate a spirit of self-denial and to yield myself a prisoner of love to the Redeemer of the world. Amen and Amen.' ^{4}.

(H) the young man was William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army

f. those are tough, daunting resolutions that we have just read; but so is that which James asks us all to make

B. 'Know, My Beloved Brethren; Let Everyone Be ...' James 1:19

1. Attend to the Word of God (verse 19)

- a. the word variously translated as 'wherefore', 'so then', and 'you know'
- (A) is in my opinion best understood, as in the RSV, as an imperative
 - (B) with the object being the 'word of truth' in the preceding verse
 - (C) this command, 'know (the word of truth)' is the second of a pair of bookends, each complementing the other
 - (D) the first of these bookends is found stated in the negative in verse 16: 'Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren' – which introduces the truth about the goodness of God in order to refute any charge against God of His being the source of evil temptation
 - (E) so error or deception can be avoided by the consideration of the nature of our holy God
 - (F) the second bookend, 'Know, my beloved brethren' gives the basis by which error – being deceived – in thought, in word, in deed – can be avoided ... Know the word of truth
- b. who should pay attention to this?
- (A) everyone! 'Let every man be ...; everyone is to be ...'
 - (B) a believer can afford to disregard neither the general truth that he or she needs to pay attention and to know the word of God, nor, the specific aspect of truth James is about to give; namely to be

2. '... Quick to Listen'

- a. now, this applies, first of all, that the believer be quick to listen to the word of truth – the word 'quick' conveys the idea of eagerness
- (A) as you heard the reading of the resolutions of those great men of God, perhaps you detected their readiness to listen to God's word, to obey His revealed will as recorded in the Scriptures
 - (B) but, while there was a determination in those resolutions, there was also a dependence, a dependence that this could not be accomplished without the work of God's Holy Spirit
 - (C) indeed, William Booth added at the end of his list, 'I feel my own weakness, and without God's help I shall not keep these resolutions a day. The Lord have mercy on my guilty soul.'^{5}.
- b. so to foster the Holy Spirit's work in this matter, I suggest that if you have not already done so, you engage in regular daily Bible reading
- (A) use a version of the Bible translated into language that you understand: be that English, Tagalog,

Mandarin, Cantonese

- (B) if reading through the entire Bible in a year is too difficult for you in your circumstances, then use another plan
 - (1) the day-planners that we distributed have a number of plans
 - (2) some people use a 5-year plan for reading through the Bible
 - (3) others read through selected books: a gospel, such as Mark; the Acts; an epistle, such as Romans; the Psalms; the Proverbs
- (C) regardless, an excellent resolution to make is that of regularly spending time in the reading of God's written word
- (D) '[Blessed is the man who listens to me,](#)' says Wisdom in Proverbs 8:34, '[Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at my doorposts.](#)'
- c. quick to listen – the application of this truth is far wider
 - (A) how much do we miss in life because we fail to listen!
 - (B) does our ministry and service fall short of what God would have it be because we fail to listen to those whom we serve?
 - (C) as a church we have adopted accessibility standards – they are summarized and posted on the bulletin board – but one of the main lessons they stress is just simply listening
 - (D) marriages, parent-child relationships, friendships; all have often suffered because of a failure to listen
 - (E) let this, too, be a lesson we learn this morning

3. '[... Slow to Talk](#)'

- a. here is one reason that we fail to be quick to listen – we are talking
 - (A) interrupting is one of my own personal, great faults
 - (1) what I have to say is too important that it be lost
 - (2) if I have to wait for you to finish speaking, what I have to say is so important that I shall probably forget what it was!
 - (3) so in my haste to speak, I must miss much that is being said
 - (B) as has often been pointed out: we have two ears, only one tongue: James will have more to say

about the tongue later one

- (C) in a spiritual sense, it would be better if we were first to apply the word of truth to our own lives before unloading it upon others
 - b. the word here for 'talk' has a different nuance than the word used for 'speak' – sometimes it can be translated prattle or chatter:
 - c. we are to be slow, then, in that particular kind of thoughtless speech which gushes forth words rather than in useful conversation
 - d. Edward Hersey Richards wrote^{6}.
A Wise old owl sat in an oak,
The more he saw the less he spoke;
The less he spoke the more he heard;
Why aren't we like that wise old bird?
 - e. Proverbs 10:19 tells us, 'When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.'
 - f. how often has that quick, thoughtless word been the cause of hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and broken friendships
 - g. so, therefore, we are next encouraged to be
4. '... Slow to Anger'
- a. this is best explained as being the exact opposite of 'quick-tempered'
 - b. let me make it clear that the anger of which this is speaking is not the measured response against injustice and wrong-doing, such as Jesus had in Mark 3, when the religious rulers were seeking a ground by which to accuse him of his healing on the Sabbath of the man with the withered hand: Mark 3:5 describes that anger: '... looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, ...'
 - c. no, this is that anger which is fuelled by passion, and fuels passion in turn; the rage that bursting out controls our speech and actions
 - d. I make the excuse, 'I couldn't control myself,' but the word of truth has a different message; we are told that we have the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and 'self-control' is part of the fruit of the Spirit – the word in King James' day was 'temperance' ... keeping your temper

- e. 'Keep your shirt on!'←{7}.
 - (A) In times past, only a very well-to-do gentleman owned several shirts, so getting into a fight was no reason to ruin what might very well be your one and only shirt. Fabrics were homespun, coarser, and constricting. Before starting a fight you removed your shirt.
 - (B) Sam and Ben might be fiercely arguing: but then Sam sees Ben unbuttoning his shirt. Unless Sam were eager to fight Ben, Sam would cry out, 'Keep your shirt on!' In other words, 'Let's not be hasty about getting into a fight.' 'Keep your shirt on' still means 'don't be in such a hurry,' often as a way to tone down an argument
 - (C) that is being 'slow to anger'
- f. listen to what Paul had to say to the church at Ephesus
 - (A) '26 «Be angry, and yet do not sin;» do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.' (Ephesians 4:26-27) and then explains the source of anger,
 - (B) 'Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.' (Ephesians 4:31)
 - (C) if we show self-control in these things, then we shall have gone a long way in being slow to anger; this we do ...

C. For the Sake of Righteousness..... James 1:20

1. 'Man's Anger' vs 'God's Righteousness'
 - a. when we come to verse 20 we are faced with a vary stark contrast
 - b. I am looking at this verse in the order that it is written in Greek; it is a very unnatural order to use in English, but in Greek its is not
 - c. the verse begins with the subject of the verse, 'anger' and that is linked to the preceding verse by the word 'for' – James is going to explain what he has just said about being 'slow to anger'
 - d. he qualifies that anger; it is not like that of Jesus we spoke of a minute ago, but the 'anger of a man' – not mankind in general, but the anger whose source is in an individual man; in his nature, his temperament, his character, his pride – its source is the 'his own lust' of verse 14
 - e. next comes the object of the verse: 'righteousness' and being thus set side by side the difference between them is immediately evident

- (A) this would be so, even if this 'righteousness' were not described any further – but it is, and that also with contrast
- (B) it is the 'righteousness' having God – His nature, His character, His holiness – as its source
- (C) we have man-sourced anger versus God-sourced righteousness
- f. these are mutually exclusive; they are oil and water; they do not mix
- g. the verse ends with the verb linking the subject and the object

2. 'It Does Not Achieve'

- a. this subject, anger, and this object, righteousness, will not link
- b. we cannot in any fashion attribute your anger to God, or excuse it
 - (A) we cannot simply say, 'well that's the way he made me'
 - (B) because, one of God's purposes in bringing us to salvation is that we should practise righteousness
 - (C) Romans 8:29, 'For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren'
- c. only the Holy Spirit can give victory in what James has been teaching, so that God's purpose of righteousness is achieved in our lives

D. Conclusion – let this coming year be one of resolution to foster the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives for righteousness' sake; for His Name's sake.

E. End Notes

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Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard version, used by permission. Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in *(braces)*. Version identifiers are:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM	-	Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC	-	The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
EGT	-	The Expositor’s Greek Testament, <i>James</i> , by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
Lange	-	Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
NICNT	-	The New International Commentary on the New Testament, <i>Commentary on the Epistles of James and John</i> by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
TYN	-	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, <i>The General Epistle of James</i> , by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
Kerux	-	The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com .

2. *'I Am Resolved. Are You?'* by Peter Beck, Kerux illustrations #30350
3. Quoted from Kerux illustrations #2005, 8036.
4. *'Booth’s Resolutions,'* – Kerux illustrations 22008.
5. *ibid.*
6. Kerux illustration #6337
7. From Kerux illustration 34303 by Judy Woodward Bates