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A Faith that Works The Epistle of James

***You see that a person is
justified by works and not by
faith alone. (2:24)***

***“Be Angry, Just be Sure it is The
Right Kind of Anger”***

May 24, 2015

Sermon Text: James 1:19ff

Scripture Reading: 2 Thes 1:3-12

Introduction-

Anger. Now here is a subject that every Christian absolutely *must* get a firm grip on. I could go on for hours and hours right now talking to you about how this subject is so often distorted and used against us by the enemy. So let's see if we can come to real clarity regarding what God's

Word teaches us about *anger*. Here is our passage in James—

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 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)

First, notice the progression: If we are quick to *listen*, slow to *speak*, then the likelihood of sinful anger breaking out in us is very much lessened, right? When we don't listen to someone and really hear what they are saying, when we quickly and unthinkingly respond and set our tongue going, what James calls the anger of man produces unrighteousness – ie, *sin*. James will have much more to say about sins of the tongue later.

So there is wisdom. Be quick to hear. *Hear* what someone is telling us. And

that can be very hard because it is so easy to think that we already have heard and understood what they are saying, when we haven't. And you know the old bent within us that makes us be thinking more about what WE are going to say as soon as the person we are "listening" to shuts up so we can talk!

Communication specialists have done studies on these things and when you read what they have learned you come away amazed that human beings are able to communicate at ALL!

Listening carefully to what someone is saying to us is a mark of genuine love and it is essential if peace is going to exist in our relationships. If we have not correctly *heard* someone, it is a certainty that what we *say* to them is going to just widen the gulf between us.

Of course these things require a heart *that desires peace*. A wicked man will never be quick to hear nor slow to speak – his anger and malevolence toward others will just rage.

Wisdom then from James –

- Quick to hear
- Slow to speak
- Slow to anger

Proverbs has much to say to us about the anger of man – sinful anger. There are people who use outbursts of anger to punish and control others. If angry outbursts are a frequent occurrence in a person, then this is sin that needs to be confessed and conquered.

Proverbs 14:29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

Proverbs 15:18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

Proverbs 15:18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

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

Proverbs 19:11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

What do we see here? When we permit our sinful flesh to break out in anger, we are acting like a fool. "He who has a hasty temper exalts folly." A person who is characterized by angry outbursts is a person who is *a troublemaker*. Such a person creates strife and ruins relationships. Such a person

lacks good sense. In his or her anger, not even the smallest offense will be overlooked. Constant trouble and strife. Such a person is driven by self and a quest for self-glory. If you are such a person, if you are an angry person, then you have some real issues of sin to face up to.

Two Kinds of Anger

Now, what I would like to do for the rest of our time this morning is examine *two kinds of anger*. Namely:

- The anger of man
- The anger of God

One produces UN-righteousness (sin), the other is in its very nature righteous and good. There is, in other words, evil anger AND righteous anger. One we must avoid, the other we must be certain is a characteristic of our hearts.

Follow along as I read quite a number of Scriptures regarding anger and let's see what Scripture reveals about it. First we will look in the Psalms:

Psalms 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalms 4:4 Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah

Psalms 7:6 Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.

Psalms 18:7-17 Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. (8) Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. (9) He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. (10) He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind. (11) He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water. (12) Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds. (13) The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. (14) And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. (15) Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your

nostrils. (16) He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. (17) He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

Alright then, let's pause here and see what principles are evident:

1. Anger, in its essence, is not sinful. Anger is a character quality of God Himself. Not only then is it not sinful in itself, but the anger of the Lord is GOOD and right!
2. We can be angry and not sin in doing so – “Be angry, and do not sin.” This is repeated by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament.
3. It is right and good for us to call upon the Lord to rise up *in His anger*, and strike down His (and thus the godly man's) enemies. “Arise, O Lord, in your anger”!
4. It is in His holy anger that the Lord judges the wicked and rescues His people.

Do you really want to serve a god who never gets angry? Apparently many professing Christians today do! They tell us, when we become angry over evil, that we must never be angry. That we must loooove everyone and do

kind things for our enemies. Then they quote Scripture to supposedly back it up! The thing can get very guilting and confusing. After all, didn't Jesus say –

Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

And yet this very same Jesus did this –

John 2:14-16 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. (15) And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. (16) And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Once again we must be on guard against the common error of someone taking a single Scripture, running with it, and making it into a universal and absolute principle for every and all occasions. We must take other Scripture teaching into consideration or we will go wrong. This is where, for example, the pacifist goes wrong and insists that it is always wrong for a Christian to go to war or to exercise self-defense.

Alright then, there are two kinds of anger. One is sinful. One is righteous. Let's read on –

Psalms 37:8-9 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. (9) For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

Psalms 69:21-25 They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. (22) Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. (23) Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. (24) Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. (25) May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents.

Let me read to you now the 78th Psalm. It is a long Psalm, recounting the patience of the Lord with Israel in the days of the Wilderness and more. As I read, notice very, very carefully this principle:

Exodus 34:6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**, and

abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

Numbers 14:18 'The LORD is **slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.'

Psalms 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

See it? Let's state the principle –

The Lord is merciful and gracious. He is slow to anger. But His anger WILL be aroused if the wicked refuse to repent, and once God's anger is aroused, it is intense, it is terrifying, it is a consuming fire that the wicked will not survive. Remember the warning of Psalm 2 -

Psalms 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Alright then, as I read this 78th Psalm, follow along and notice the slowness of God to anger, and yet the intensity

of His anger when it is finally kindled against the wicked:

Psalms 78:1-72 A Maskil of Asaph. Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! (2) I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, (3) things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. (4) We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

(5) He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, (6) that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, (7) so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; (8) and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

(9) The Ephraimites, armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle. (10) They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk

according to his law. (11) They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them. (12) In the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan. (13) He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap. (14) In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light. (15) He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. (16) He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers. (17) Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.

(18) They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved. (19) They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness? (20) He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?"

(21) Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel, (22) because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.

(23) Yet he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven, (24) and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. (25) Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance. (26) He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by his power he led out the south wind; (27) he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; (28) he let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. (29) And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they craved.

(30) But before they had satisfied their craving, while the food was still in their mouths, (31) the anger of God rose against them, and he killed the strongest of them and laid low the young men of Israel. (32) In spite of all this, they still sinned; despite his wonders, they did not believe. (33) So he made their days vanish like a breath, and their years in terror.

(34) When he killed them, they sought him; they repented and sought God earnestly. (35) They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer. (36) But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues. (37) Their

heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.

(38) Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath. (39) He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again. (40) How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert! (41) They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel. (42) They did not remember his power or the day when he redeemed them from the foe, (43) when he performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan. (44) He turned their rivers to blood, so that they could not drink of their streams. (45) He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them. (46) He gave their crops to the destroying locust and the fruit of their labor to the locust. (47) He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamores with frost. (48) He gave over their cattle to the hail and their flocks to thunderbolts. (49) He let loose on them his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels. (50) He made a

path for his anger; he did not spare them from death, but gave their lives over to the plague. (51) He struck down every firstborn in Egypt, the firstfruits of their strength in the tents of Ham. (52) Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. (53) He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. (54) And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won. (55) He drove out nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.

(56) Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies, (57) but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers; they twisted like a deceitful bow. (58) For they provoked him to anger with their high places; they moved him to jealousy with their idols.

(59) When God heard, he was full of wrath, and he utterly rejected Israel. (60) He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind, (61) and delivered his power to captivity, his glory to the hand of

the foe. (62) He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage. (63) Fire devoured their young men, and their young women had no marriage song. (64) Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation. (65) Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, like a strong man shouting because of wine. (66) And he put his adversaries to rout; he put them to everlasting shame. (67) He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, (68) but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves.

(69) He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. (70) He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; (71) from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. (72) With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.

This is the righteous anger of the Lord. It is intense. It is furious. It is burning. It is the wrath and anger that will break out against the wicked on the Day all men stand before Him.

And it is this wrath and anger that WE can look forward to and pray for. We

can “hunger and thirst” for this righteousness against the Lord’s enemies and those who persecute His people. It is an avenging anger and we are right to pray for it.

Furthermore, it is right for us to *feel this anger in ourselves*. This anger in fact, I would suggest, is still another fruit of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. What we must not do is permit fleshly “anger of man” to break out which most often evidences itself in –

“seeking vengeance ourselves against our enemies.”

Unrighteous anger does not wait for the justice and vengeance of the Lord, and this anger is what James warns us –

“...does not produce the righteousness of God.”

The anger of man is not quick to hear nor slow to speak, and it breaks out from selfish motives. Righteous anger on the other hand looks to the Lord and asks for justice from Him, waiting for His anger and His wrath to be effected against the wicked. This divine wrath can come now, or later, or both. It can be delivered in many different ways, one way being that of the civil government (assuming the civil powers are doing their divinely-appointed job!).

Conclusion

In our day, it seems that the prevailing climate in the church is one that calls anger of any kind *unrighteousness*. Yes, we still need to guard ourselves against sinful, fleshly anger as James cautions us. We must leave vengeance to the Lord.

At the same time, wonderful Bible doctrines such as the love, grace, and mercy of God are frequently and regularly distorted by the “politically, spiritually ‘correct’” elite of evangelicalism. Books that write about how we must always forgive the wicked and reconcile with them and how we must win the hearts of the wicked by showering them with kindness – and at the same time *forbidding us from being angry or from pleading with the Lord to bring His fury down upon them* – are the books that publishers want to grab up and make money off of. Write a book about the vengeance and furious, burning wrath of God being good and righteous and something we long for – and good luck finding a publisher!

Even this passage here in James has often been used against anyone expressing *righteous anger* –

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| James 1:19-20 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, |
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slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

You can just hear it, can't you? "Now, don't be angry. The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God you know." But READ the verse!

Yes, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, BUT – in cases of wickedness, GET ANGRY! James in no way precludes that, right? Just be sure it is that anger of God and not the anger of man's sinful flesh. Seek justice. Announce the evil from the rooftops. But be sure to leave vengeance to the Lord and to His appointed agents of justice.

"If you never get angry, if you never hunger and thirst for righteousness when evil abounds, then you are not a Christian. Plain and simple."

Let me close with an example of how typical evangelical writings today pervert grace and forbid even righteous anger. This is taken from a recent blog post by Barbara Roberts. She did a very thorough and excellent review of a book called *Is it My Fault? – Hope and Healing For Those Suffering Domestic Violence*, by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb. She noted that the Holcombs present a wrong, unbiblical view of grace. Listen to what she found:

They underplay or ignore God's judgement and wrath for sin.

God is not standing idly by to watch violence run its course. He will not allow evil to have the final word. His response to evil and violence is redemption, renewal and re-creation. (113)

This is cold comfort for victims since the other aspect of God's response to evil — judgment and wrath for all evildoers who refuse to humble themselves and repent— has not been mentioned. In my opinion, the Holcomb's speak far too little about the wrath God has for abusers and the judgment that is stored up for them if they remain stiff necked and hardened of heart.

God is a God of grace, not of karma. Karma says you get what you deserve. Grace says the opposite. Grace is getting what you don't deserve and not getting what you do deserve. . . . A shorthand way of thinking about grace is "mercy, not merit." God is not interested in punishing you or making you pay. He's interested in lavishing you with His grace. (81)

Yes; karma is an unbiblical concept. But the Bible does talk about sowing and reaping! And if God is not interested in punishing, then the unrepentant abuser gets off scot free and we all walk down the yellow brick road to the wizard's house where Hell is magically taken away by the rose coloured glasses he gives us. — Don't the false shepherds love this doctrine: they can lavish grace on the high-tithing abusers who populate their pews and their elders' boards!

And "God is not interested in punishing you and making you pay" will be a trigger for victims, because the word 'you' points right at them. Pay for what? Be punished for what? Elsewhere in the book the Holcombs say the victim is not to blame for the abuse, but their words here — punishing you and making you pay — seem to be inferring that the victim IS guilty of abuse and she only gets off being punished for it because God gives her grace.

The cross is God's attack on sin and violence; it is salvation from sin and its effects. The cross really is a coup de grace, meaning "stroke of grace," which refers to the

deathblow delivered to the misery of our suffering. (114)

The Bible teaches that Christ's death on the Cross brings us salvation from the eternal penalty of our sin, and sets us free from the power of the devil so we are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to Christ — with the indwelling Spirit to help us resist temptation. But it does not teach that Christ's death saves us from all the effects of sin. David the adulterer/murderer suffered many consequences for his sin through the remainder of his life. Tamar the victim of rape suffered many consequences for the sins committed against her — and I'm referring to sins plural because there was the rape by her brother Amnon; the connivance of his friend Jonadab in the rape; her brother Absalom's discounting of her pain and him telling her to keep quiet about it; and her father David's failure to justly punish her rapist. God's grace didn't lift all the effects of the sins that these people committed against Tamar.

The gospel is the announcement that Jesus (the God-man) lived a perfect life, and died in our place, and rose from the dead. Those who trust in the person and work of Jesus receive the

good news that God's "No" went to Jesus and God's "Yes" is all He will ever say to them. Your sins are forgiven and you are declared righteous. You are an adopted child of God. (220)

Christlike, or bitter simply because they are hungering and thirsting for the righteous anger of God to come against their tormentors.

If God only ever says "Yes" to believers, what about how He sometimes chastises his children? God has been reduced to the genial uncle in the skies by the above phraseology of the Holcombs. [A Cry For Justice Blog, cryingoutforjustice.com]

James 1:19-20 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.

Yes, reject the fleshly, sinful anger of man. It will not produce righteousness and will only lead us into further sin.

But, don't reject anger out of hand. Embrace and hunger for the righteous anger of the Lord. Pray for it. Pray for it to break out upon the wicked. Look forward with great anticipation to that final Day when the wrath of the Son is kindled and every evil being will perish and be gone from us forever. And never, never accuse a victim of evil of being unforgiving, un-