

Get a Grip! (on anger) – James 1:19-21

(Blank) Trust you received email sent last Monday re the sprinkler pipe that burst
This is where it started (**photo**) – resulting in a flood of dirty, black, smelly water
Though some of our worship equipment got wet, there was no damage
Tech Team did awesome job of getting us up and running in very short amount of time
Seeing how it could have been a *lot* worse and certainly at a worse time
We have much to be thankful for; I thank God for his protection/provision

This morning it's about anger, as in **Get a Grip! (on anger)**

For some of you, your anger is like a volcano that lies dormant for years/centuries
Pressure slowly building beneath the surface, until one day, due to a shift in fabric of
the earth, much like a shift in the circumstances of your life, you boil over/explode
Or maybe your anger is a way of life like Old Faithful, the hot springs geyser in
Yellowstone Nat'l Park – you're constantly erupting about something

In either case, you need to need to get a grip on it, especially if it has a grip on you
That's the issue here in James 1:19-21 (Bibles)
19 – *Know this*; Understand this; Get this right

When you need to get a grip on anger; Or when it has a grip on you . . .

Open your ears (v19)

Let every person be quick to hear/listen – unfortunately, that's not the norm
Somebody once said that most of the conversations in this world are *dialogues of the deaf* (Paul Tournier, *To Understand Each Other*) . . .
Everybody talking and nobody listening

Why is that? Why are we such poor listeners? Let's just say it like it is . . .

Listening is work

Most people are not great communicators – takes work to hear them, and listen to them
Takes even more work to hear their *heart*, sometimes despite their words
Every wife – “yes, preach it”
Not only that, but in this day and age, we so gorge ourselves on *visual* stimuli, that
we're not sure what to do with words without pictures
We're image rich and word poor – makes listening even more difficult

Listening requires love

We'd much rather talk about ourselves than listen to someone else, true?
And pretty much we think our point of view is the most important anyway
That's why some of you never get beyond waiting your turn to talk
But that's not listening and that's not love
Listening requires a genuine concern for the one who's talking
An intense interest in who they are and what they have to say

Listening takes time

We're so conditioned to 15 second TV scenes, we can't handle a 15 min conversation
If you don't downshift, you'll never listen well
If you don't cultivate some patience, you'll never be quick to hear
It takes time for people to unwind thoughts; Time to put them all together, get them out
To the more you rush it, the less you'll hear

Of course work, love, and time are the last things on your mind when you're angry
But they're absolutely necessary if you're going to get a grip on it

Open your ears, and . . .

Close your mouth (v19)

Be slow to speak

Prov 10:19 – *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever
restrains his lips is prudent* [wise, sensible].
Prov 17:28 – *Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise*

If you're going to get a grip on anger, you have to close your mouth
You have to shut the gate through which anger escapes
Because 9 times out of 10, the rage of anger vents first through the mouth
The bigger your problem with anger, the longer you need to keep it closed
Easy to say; Hard to do

And when you do speak, especially when you're angry – THINK first
This is a little acronym I picked up from Joel Anderson, one of the Harvest pastors
In order to be slow to speak, THINK first; Ask yourself

T – Is it True? T

H – Is it Helpful? H

I – Is it Inflammatory? I [Insightful instead??]

N – Is it Necessary? N

K – Is it Kind? K

When it comes to getting a grip on anger – THINK before you talk
And if it doesn't meet those criteria – close your mouth

Lengthen your fuse (v19)

Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger

When I played basketball, I was Mr. Steady – very intense, but very focused/poised
I don't ever recall reacting either good or bad to a call by the officials, or a play on the
court, or a decision by the coach – I was very level-headed
But I'm ashamed to admit that after I graduated and became a spectator, I was out of
control
So much so that I cringe at the thought of myself when I think back on those few years
And what people must have thought

Prov 29:11 – *A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.*

Based on that, I was a fool with a capital “F,” with a very short fuse
I don't remember a pivotal moment or anything like that
But over time, God got a hold of me and convicted me of it
And I began to learn some things about getting a grip on my anger; Call it . . .

4 Ways to Lengthen Your Fuse

1. Admit you have a problem
Sit down with the person closest to you – best friend, your spouse, whoever . . .
And admit you have a problem
And when they're like “ya” – don't get mad at them
If you're not sure if you have a short fuse, ask them
Ask them if you get angry too much or too easily

2. Ask God for help

Anything else is a band-aid on a gaping wound

You can go to as many anger management classes you want

You can take as many pills as you like

You can attend a different support group every night of the week

But apart from *God's* help, you're fighting a losing battle

You know what he'll do?

He'll convince you to memorize portions of his Word that deal with anger – then bring them to mind at crucial moments

He'll impress on you the need for an accountability partner – then humble you when you have to admit you failed that week

He'll sensitize your heart to the promptings of his Spirit – then compel you with that still small voice at key moments

If you need to lengthen your fuse – ask God for help, and then do the work

3. Pause for perspective

Do we tend to make mountains out of mole hills, or what?

We get so caught up in the heat of the moment and wrapped around the axle . . .

When in the grand scheme of things, it's not that important

And it's certainly not worth your eye-bulging, vein-popping, gasket-blowing anger

When the pressure starts to mount – take a deep breath

Sometimes that's all it takes to regain God's perspective – big picture/long-term

4. Leave the room

Not the house; And not for good; And not un-announced

If you're near the end of your fuse, take a step back; take a time out

It's better than saying something you shouldn't, or in a way you'll regret

Once you've re-gained your composure, *then* come back and re-engage the discussion

- One thing to clarify – James is not talking about *righteous* anger here . . .

Anger due to sin or injustice, like Jesus demonstrated at times

Righteous anger can be a strong motivator to do what's right and respond with boldness

But even then, it should be a last resort

And never out of control or unbecoming of the name you proclaim

That's when it becomes unrighteous – which is why James says be slow to it

Why? Because *the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires*

This is intended to be a warning and reminder to . . .

Remember your calling (v20)

When you begin to seethe with anger, remember the life/responsibility to which God has called you – remember what it is that God requires of you

Though we are now *declared* righteous in Christ (*justified*), and though we will *be* perfectly righteous on the other side of death (*glorified*) . . .

In between, God wants us to be *sanctified* – set apart and *growing* in our righteousness

To walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Eph 4:1)

To be holy in all our conduct (1 Pet 1:15)

To train ourselves for godliness (our theme verse for the year from 1 Tim 4:7)

And anger runs contrary to that – it does not produce *the righteousness God requires*

In fact, it produces exactly the opposite – unrighteousness

It's not only sin in and of itself, it produces more sin, and a life filled w/ *consequences*

Like when Moses was disqualified from entering the Promised Land due to his disobedience in a moment of anger

Ever wondered what God is withholding from you because of *your* anger?

Then there's the consequence on judgment day of having to give account for *every* careless word you speak (Mt 12:36)

Anger not only fails to produce *righteousness*, it leads to *unrighteousness*, and serious consequences

All the more reason to get a grip when anger begins to boil, and remember your calling

All the more reason to remember whose you are; and who you represent

And the godliness he expects of you

W/ the hope that it will arrest your attention, and stem the rising tide

A rising tide that *starts* in your heart

Which is why James says – *Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness*

IOW – in order to get a grip on anger, start by taking out the garbage

Take out the garbage (v21a)

Get rid of the sin in your life; throw it out; be done with it

Rampant wickedness is deliberate, determined sin; and a lot of it

Filthiness refers to any sort of moral defilement or impurity of the heart

James is like – get rid of it; *all* of it; Don't just clean a closet or two, clean house

Interesting part is this word *filthiness* – comes from a term used for wax in the ear, that impairs hearing

Meaning that sin is a barrier to righteousness, just like wax is a barrier to hearing

You'll never get a grip on anger if your life is filled with sin

And *put away* doesn't mean stick it in a closet to be accessed later

It doesn't mean hide your dirty magazines in a box in the basement just in case you might want to go back to them

It doesn't mean remember your marginal websites long after you've deleted them

It doesn't mean pushing the 12 pack to the back of the fridge if you just got drunk last weekend

It doesn't mean putting your relationship on *hold* when you've just indulged in sex outside of marriage

No, no – *put away* means ending the relationship

It means throwing the alcohol out; It means burning your magazines

It means giving your computer away if necessary

It means doing whatever you have to do to get rid of the sin in your life, for good

Why? Because there's a direct connection between a rotten heart and a filthy mouth . . .

A direct connection between a sinful life and an angry person

Jesus said (**Mt 12:34-35**) – *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.*

An abundance of filthiness/wickedness, results in an abundance of anger

Anger is simply the overflow

That's why counselors so often see a problem with pornography when they see a
problem with anger – it's all connected
And that's why if you're going to get a grip on it, you must first take out the garbage

And then, when you do . . .

Take the truth to heart (v21b)

Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls

The implanted word is the truth of who God is and what he requires of you . . .

That resides within every single person who trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord

This doesn't mean that you know it all, the whole book

But it does imply that you know *enough*

And his point is – what you do know, you need to *receive with meekness*

That is, you need to humbly take to heart, the truth you already know

Receive with meekness the implanted word

Take it to heart and allow it to influence your life

If you're going to get a grip on all that is wrong, you have to accept all that is right, and
take it to heart

If you do, it will save your soul

That's the power of the implanted Word

That's the power of God for salvation in the first place – the truth sets you free and
saves your soul

But it doesn't stop there – it's also the power of God to *restore* our lives, & make us
whole/complete as we live them

And it's at our disposal, *if* we get rid of the garbage, and take it to heart

Which means – no more rationalizing God's commands; No more ignoring God's truth

No more arguing God's ways

If you're going to get a grip on anger . . .

Open your ears; Close your mouth; Lengthen your fuse

Remember your calling; Take out the garbage; Take the truth to heart