

The Book of James begins with these words, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a rather unique New Testament Book for it was written by James, the half brother of Jesus. During the days when Jesus walked this earth, James did not believe his brother was the Messiah. Yes, Jesus had brothers and sisters. We read in Matthew 13:55 “Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ “And His sisters, are they not all with us? Of course, these were half brothers and sisters of Jesus. Same mother, different father. Mary had several children after Jesus.

Do you know what changed James's mind to believe that his brother was the true Messiah? No, it was not Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus died a failure in James's mind. But James saw his brother after he had risen from the dead and that changed and transformed James forever. The risen Christ appeared to his brother James. Can you imagine that reunion? “Surprise!”

Friends, one day we too will see the risen Savior and we too will be changed forever, in the blink of an eye. When we see Him, all our previous sufferings will be forgotten instantly for the goodness of God will be felt fully. I do not think anyone will even want to question God for God will be seen in all his power and glory, melting us from having the audacity to question God. Until that day, we do see the risen Lord as He is described in the Gospels, the book of Acts and Revelation. Jesus is worthy of our full obedience now and when we see Jesus in all His worthiness in heaven, how glad we will be that we lived our lives serving the Lord with our whole heart.

Friends, the only people who are ready to see Jesus are those who know him personally. Please, today, open up your heart to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of all your sins. Never ever put it off for today is the day of salvation. This is the one invitation you do

not want to reject. I want every person in this church to pray the sinner's prayer at least once.

"Lord Jesus, please forgive me for my sins and come into my life."

The Reformation Study Bible says this about James, the author of the book of James. "It was said that James' knees became so calloused from prayer that they resembled the knees of camels. This book may be the earliest New Testament writing. James was martyred in A.D. 62, being thrown down from the temple and beaten to death with a club. To die for the sake of Christ was truly an honor, not a horror."

James begins his letter telling the Christians to rejoice in their suffering, to rejoice when they experience trials of all sorts knowing that the testing of their faith produces steadfastness, endurance, and patience. **1. Suffering is used of God to make us more complete in Christ.** James lived out his faith even until the end and one day we will meet him. Luther did not like the book of James too much and in all frankness, Luther was not always correct nor are we.

If you are in the midst of suffering today, God's word to you is "Rejoice." God knows what He is doing in your life. God has not turned against you. I do not know the reason why you are suffering but I do know God wants you to not lose heart but to rejoice. To rejoice is to know and to have an inner confidence knowing that whatever happens to you God will bring good out of it and use it for God's greater glory. God is always trustworthy, and He is still in control. Just this week there were some very heavy prayer requests. **2. The good news is God's compassion is most often revealed to us in deeper ways in the midst of our struggles so we can give God's compassion to others in similar struggles.**

Another topic in the first chapter of James is the topic of the tongue and anger of which the rest of my sermon will be expounding on. In the Old Testament book of Proverbs, the topic of the tongue and anger comes up frequently. For example:

Proverbs 19:19 Short-tempered people must pay their own penalty. If you rescue them once, you will have to do it again.

Proverbs 22:24-25 Keep away from angry, short-tempered people, 25 or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.

Proverbs 13:3 (NLT2) ³ Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything.

Proverbs 18:21 (NLT2) ²¹ The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.

James is considered the Proverbs of the New Testament. James writes, "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. ²⁶ If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.

This is a hard teaching. God can use your words to heal, and you and I can use our words to destroy. Our words can be like throwing fire, word bombs, into a person's home. One sentence might burn down an entire home and the people inside scarred for life if they are able to make it out of the house. It deeply bothers me when I hear of firemen and women losing their lives in fires that are purposely set such as the great forest fires out west. Our words recklessly thrown out harms people's lives as they are scorched. We can kill people with our words.

Do you have a short fuse? Does it take little to cause you to blow? The word of the Lord tells us such persons are dangerous and not to take up their habits. I see the anger in our nation as out of control and burning hotter all the time.

"Understand this my dear brothers and sisters Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

A pastor decided to preach a sermon on anger. After the sermon he invited church members who needed special prayer regarding anger to come forward. Nineteen responded and every one of them was the mother of a small child. One mother had very little sleep for several nights as the baby would not stop crying. At one point she became so angry that she

scared herself completely thinking she wanted to harm her baby. Gary Thomas writes, “My children have caused me to laugh as hard as I have ever laughed; at other times, I’ve become so angry at them it frightened me to the point where I almost didn’t recognize myself,” (Gary Thomas, Sacred Parenting, 103).

Anger in itself is not a sin for God himself gets angry. Isaiah writes, “See, the Name of the Lord comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire.” Friends, this is not just some small irritation. This is God’s wrath, and it is very real. Augustine has correctly defined God’s anger and wrath as his “just displeasure against sin.” Friends, God hates sin. He hates your sin, and He hates my sin. He even hates the sins that the culture no longer considers sin.

There are Biblical examples for when God’s people used anger rightly or correctly. When Moses came down the mountain and saw the sin of the people and threw at them the tablets of stone. God used the anger of Moses to correct the people of God. Nehemiah used anger wisely when he saw the poor being taken advantage of by God’s people. Used rightly, used righteously, anger initiates wise action to correct the situation. God can use anger in our lives when it motivates us to act in God’s wisdom to accomplish God’s will. Moses also used anger in a sinful way and that kept him from entering the Promised Land.

My point is this. When anger motivates us to do the right thing, to act righteously, to obey God and bring reconciliation, then anger can be good.

We will never be able to avoid anger, but we can mature in the way we handle it. We actually become the angriest with those that we love the most. The greater our emotional involvement, the greater our potential to get really angry, because we care so deeply about what happens to those we love.

One husband has seen very clearly the wounds that he has caused his wife. Gary Thomas writes about this couple that when the wife finishes yelling at the husband he always

asks, "Are you mad or are you sad?" When we are wounded by someone, we can get exceptionally angry. One healthy way to express anger quietly is to first express the pain behind the anger. That tends to defuse the anger.

One of the most difficult problems we can have with anger is anger toward God. What can be more difficult than seeing a young child die accidentally or by an illness? *Lord, you could have stopped the accident from happening or Lord you could have healed the child. What's wrong with you God?* I read of an incident in a particular church where one person was miraculously healed of an illness where 3 pews away was a father of young children who died 3 weeks later of a brain tumor. God Why? Does this mean the person who was healed had more faith or was a better Christian than the one who died? Absolutely not. This was God's providential choice and God offers no explanation.

Friends, this is why God calls us to absolute surrender to God. True Christianity seeks to surrender the human will in order to serve and give glory to God. We will feel disappointed with God, frustrated with God, even angry at God, but what matters is that we live out the words of Samuel that we read, "Do not be afraid, but serve the Lord with all your heart." When I put my hand in the air please say, "but we will serve the Lord." No matter what happens to us we are here to serve the Lord.

We may face unemployment, but we will serve the Lord.
We may go to 6 funerals in one month, but we will serve the Lord.
We may have two of our three children rebel, but we will serve the Lord.
We may have cancer return after a time of remission, but we will serve the Lord.
We may live in terrible physical pain, but we will serve the Lord.

God has purposefully chosen to keep us in the dark when it comes to the whys. God, why did you let this happen? The Bible does not answer all our questions, but we are told to keep believing and never lose heart. It may not seem like it, but no one loves you more than God does. No one cares for you more than God does. God proved his love for you most clearly by dying for you on the cross. God is not against you God is for you.

This is why friends we cannot let our emotions run our lives. We have to challenge our emotions, including our anger with God's absolute truth. If not, our emotions and thoughts will destroy our faith, foster resentment, and give birth to arrogant rebellion.

I conclude with these points:

1. **God can use anger to motivate us to wise action and then we must let the anger go.**
2. **We must not let the sun go down on our anger which means we must contain anger within its proper season and bring it to an end lest it give birth to resentment and bitterness, thus avoiding eruptions (Mt. St. Helens). Share your pain, not your anger.**
3. **We need to govern anger by reason, spiritual maturity, and patient wisdom. The Bible says love isn't easily angered. Paul tells us that church leaders are not to be quick tempered.**
4. **Anger is wrong when you find yourself angry at every other person's sin and not your own sin. To focus on someone else's sin and not your own is to stop practicing grace-based faith. That is Phariseeism, seeing the little speck in your brother's eye and not seeing the log of sin in your own.**
5. **The person you are most angry with is often yourself. It can be easier for us to forgive others than to forgive ourselves for short comings, failures, the pain you have caused others, and more.**

Unhealthy anger can harm your immune system, cause your heart to work harder, and can even affect your lungs. Unhealthy anger poisons relationships, families, even churches. The good news is, God Himself is bigger than our anger and more powerful than any of our frustrations. In your anger stop, seek God's wisdom, and ask the Lord to help you express yourself with God's wisdom that is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. James lived with such a wise person. He knew exactly who he was talking about, his brother Jesus. Amen and Amen.