

Scripture

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Application Summary

James again takes time out to address the reader in his love as a brother in Jesus. He seems to want to continue to encourage his audience, realizing his writing will likely be a rebuke, and one in love. He cares so much for them (and us) that he wants to keep us reassured of his heart for us, and also that he is subject to the same scrutiny.

As God has promised, He has set out to transform each of us into a new creature, someone who ideally will become more and more like Jesus. And why? Because it is for His Glory we would want to imitate Jesus as best as possible, because what He is is good, and because in doing so it furthers His Kingdom. In this way, His Kingdom might be expanded in at least two ways. In us, as believers, our heart grows and changes. As we are renewed and strive to set aside our sinful ways, the change in us shines out to the World as the evidence of God's reality. Our shining out will then capture the attention of people yet unsaved and cause curiosity and conviction, and then make another instance for God's Message to be proclaimed. Those chosen to be saved are brought into the Kingdom by and through our Savior, they are transformed and shine on in the same way, and the Kingdom grows. In all cases, God is Glorified as the One solely responsible.

The change which God promises is not easy or automatic, but requires our work as well. Dealing with us as His children, He lovingly provides the means to make this happen through the Word and It's conviction in our heart. Our responsibility is to keep ourselves in It as much as possible, and once in It, to do everything we can to make the most of It. We must be always alert to the opportunity to hear the Message, then we are to contemplate It well before forming our own opinion to oppose any conviction to change. Then finally, when our sin or area to be changed is revealed, we must not resist It or make excuses, but commit to obey the Truth and change accordingly. This is because our anger, either towards ourselves or others in sin, cannot change the heart - only the behavior, not it's source in the heart. Our outward behavior, reflecting what is in our heart, can only be changed by God through His means, and that is His Word.

So, in following God's direction by His Word, we must follow through with the opportunity to change given to us. The sin, which was revealed to the reader, now confessed, must be repented of. The outward behavior which once was rooted in that sin should change, now that it's root has been cut off by the Sword of the Word. And with this sin set aside, there is now one less issue hindering the next opportunity to receive Truth from God. When this opportunity comes, it is in meekness we should approach It, again removing all of our objections and obstacles, because this is the way that God will purify our souls from total pollution. Through the voucher of Jesus, who knows His flock through a personal and real relationship, our sins are forgiven already, and as of now God already calls us His children. But this is all based on the Promise of Jesus to stand in our place for payment on Judgment Day. And there is no surer Promise to be fulfilled! But until then, there is much work to be done, and God has promised to take us through it. It is our responsibility to do our part and make the most of this opportunity as good stewards, while acknowledging it is all possible only through Him.

Commentary

'To the brethren' – note only of those who believe and not the pagan; James exhorts us to stay prepared on all fronts so as to make ourselves most receptive to the work of the Lord in our lives. He addresses all three fronts of our person, circling in from the outer then into the Holy Word's target, the core of our heart.

'Everyone should be quick to listen' – our first defense, good or bad, to what we allow and bring into our consideration. Concerning the Wisdom of the Lord, we must always be quick in opening our ears to His Truth. (**Mk 4:9**) Listen to what is being said, not from man's perspective alone, but tested to be as of the Lord's. Never take a man's opinion of the Word without considering it against the whole counsel of the Word, (**Prov 15:22**), against the intent of the Author of the Truth, nor without petitioning His Holy Spirit for enlightenment. The Spirit is here for our counsel, our teaching, our comfort. (**Jn 14:16-18, Jn 14:26**) Pray to Him and ask to be shown the Truth as you search the Scriptures yourself to test the conclusions for their value before bringing them any further towards your heart. (**Acts 17:10-11**) The same is quickly seen in considering things of a sinful potential we might have placed before our eyes. At this point we face the decision to flee or to embrace. God, always offering an alternative to temptation, allows us to escape such things unscathed. The eyes and the ears are the first defense for good or bad. When under the Spirit's teaching, be quick to hear and do not pass on any opportunity to receive the Truth. To receive the Truth in your heart, you must first hear It. (**Rom 10:17**)

'Everyone should be...slow to speak' – Our Creator has made us so, that it is impossible to speak and listen at the same instant. Allowed past our ears, our intellect must consider what is presented before it. Often the Word, sharp as any two edged sword, cuts to

the heart in an instant conviction so that we know exactly what we must do in response. But even if so, there is always more to be gleaned from the Word, and this takes time and contemplation. **(Ps 1:2, Josh 1:8)** The Truth is meant to be meditated on, not just for the sake of our mind's understanding of It, but too for our own heart, the ultimate target. In considering the Truth, a bridled tongue is an asset. **(Job 6:24)**

'Everyone should be...slow to become angry' – The Word is offensive to our own fallen hearts. It challenges our beliefs and actions and core values, which make us who we are. It is usually difficult to face the demand It may make of us. But that is exactly what It is for! **(2 Tim 3:16-17)** In our path to Salvation, our time of Sanctification as our Lord prepares us, we undergo the transformation of our hearts, the regeneration of our minds, under the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The overall change of our hearts from hard, cold, and black as sin, to soft, warm, and alive in God requires this very thing – the reworking and reshaping of our core being which only the Word can accomplish. Nothing else has access to change our heart but God's Word. Nothing. God's Word is a function of His Love in motion, cutting to the core of the issues in any consideration. No rules of man can get to the bottom of the problem, the root of our outward person. **(Col 2:23)** And as God is concerned for our inward heart, expressing itself in our outward expression, He provides us with the Word to make that change. **(Heb 4:12)** Outward action covering a deceitful heart is rubbish to Him. Rules can only change our behavior, not the heart.

The challenge to our self, which the Word's conviction brings, should be **'received with meekness'**, not in **'wrath'**. Don't reject the yolk our loving Lord places on you. **(Matt 11:29)** Don't resist His loving instruction, but rejoice in His Gift and seek to make the most of It. **'The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God'** – A response of wrath is a response of rebellious denial of the Spirit's work. It is a rejection of His Good intent to reshape our heart. Can the Spirit's effort be honored if we continue to oppose Him? Instead, let us place ourselves patiently under His teaching and care for our own good, and for His Glory.

Having considered this, we must **'therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness'** in our lives. Note whose responsibility this is. God gives us our regenerate heart, the heart of Christ – our job is to obey this heart and live accordingly. **(Jas 1:22)** God does not take away the evil we might practice from the heart, nor the opportunities to continue to exercise it through trial and temptation. Our training is in learning to embrace the new parts of our heart, as the Spirit continues to renew it, in the face of our flesh's fallen nature. He promises to renew us; we must commit to be good stewards and put it to use, persevering through the proofing of our faith in Him. **(Heb 10:36)** Therefore, in reflection of your new heart, ask God to reveal the sinful actions rooted in your heart, then confess and repent; **'lay (it) aside'**.

In doing so, we benefit again by removing one more hindrance of our regeneration. The believer must then continue and **'receive with meekness the implanted word'**, bringing us full circle in the cycle of renewal. Having shed his wrath, his rebellion, the believer can now be humbled to be again under the Spirit's teaching in **'meekness'**, making the most of God's effort and thus His Glory. The Word is special in It's nature that It is **'implanted'**, grafted into the believer's heart. Praise God! What else can change me, O Lord? How else might I be made like You? Only You can break and make a man's heart. Let us try to do so ourselves, and see us fail, frustrated. Praise for the Word of God and the Word incarnate in our Jesus!

The Word, our Jesus, in the Spirit, **'which is able to save your soul'**. Our Sanctification is directed by this alone. The Mighty Power of God, hidden from the world in seemingly mere text. **(Mk 4:12)** The world considers it all folly, for it hasn't the key of Faith, necessary to deliver It's payload into our hearts. Faith from the Father, only accessible through His Son Jesus, only to the Elect. We cry out to God in thanks and in our need, and He hears. He lavishly blesses us in all ways through His Word. Open your heart to His blessings, remove any obstacles in It's way, place yourself at His feet and drink in His Loving Teaching, and see Him change your soul. See Him transform the dark heart into a reflection of His heart, and all from His Love, for His Glory.

Key Summary

We are to seek to place ourselves obediently under the Loving teaching of the Word, removing all hinderances and making the path straight.

We must further set aside our evil ways which retard our growth and resist the changes God seeks in the fruits of our outward person.

All of this is best realized with a meek heart.

Study Questions

What are three perimeters which surround the heart?

What can overcome all of these, and alone is able to change the heart?

What are our responsibilities in the context of this passage?

Cited Scripture

Mark 4:9

⁹And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Proverbs 15:22

²²Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

John 14:16-18

¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- ¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

John 14:26

²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Acts 17:10-11

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Romans 10:17

¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Psalms 1:2

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Joshua 1:8

⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Job 6:24

²⁴"Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Colossians 2:23

²³These things (*extra-biblical rules, regulations*) indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Hebrews 4:12

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Matthew 11:29

²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

James 1:22

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Hebrews 10:36

³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise

Mark 4:12

¹²so that

"Seeing they may see and not perceive,
And hearing they may hear and not understand;
Lest they should turn,
And their sins be forgiven them."