

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Theme: “The Testing of Your Faith”

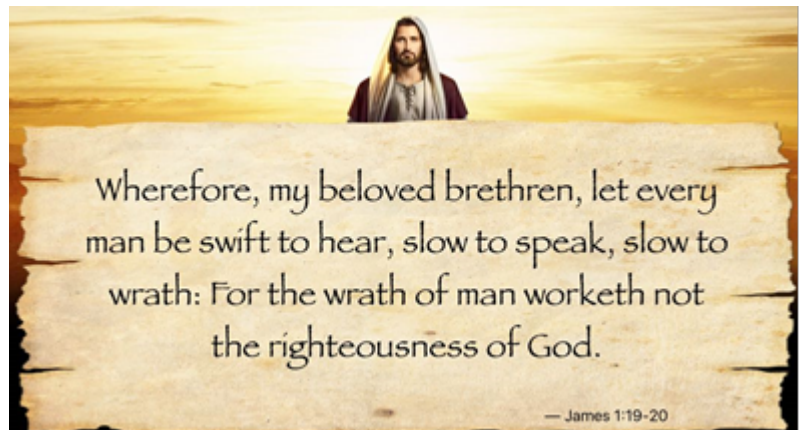
Lesson: 8 Text: 1:19-20

Date: 3-12-23

Trinity Lutheran Church

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TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(19) 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 that God requires.**

(Prov 10:19; 14:29; 17:27; Eccl 5:1,2; 7:10;

Mt 5:22; 13:17; Lk 1:6,75: 2:25; 23:50; Rom 6:1-5,12-24; 15:18; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:13,14; 12:20;

Gal 5:20; Eph 4:25,26,31; Php 1:14; Col 3:8; 1 Thess 2:4; Titus 3:2; 1 Jn 2:21; 4:1-6)

Commentary on James – “The Epistle of Faith” – Dr. David Scaer - CPH

error into their preaching. If “the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God,” the question that must be asked is what then does work that righteousness of God! It is certainly not Law preaching!

Any type of preaching that leaves the reader condemned under the anger of God without chance of rescue by the Gospel must fall into the category of false doctrine because by omission it obliterates the atonement. Not only does man’s anger not work God’s righteousness, it destroys it. God alone has the right of indignation over the breaking of His law, but He has resolved His anger in the atonement. Preaching the Law without the Gospel gives a false picture of God. Preaching anger so that the hearer is left in despair is a right which even God has surrendered because of Christ’s death. James’ admonition against anger resembles Jesus’ warning against anger towards the brother in the Sermon on the Mount: “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment” (Matt. 5:22). The one who works God’s righteousness is not man but God Himself. The alternative to the false righteousness worked by man’s anger is already contained in the phrase “the righteousness of God.” This is the righteousness which considers the sinner righteous for Christ’s sake.

They say: "It is indeed a command that we should hold back **anger** and rancor in our heart, but not the signs of **anger**." That is what we call in German "to forgive but not to forget," to plan that you will not get **angry** nor do anything wrong, but that you will deny your neighbor any kindness and show him not a single good word or marks of friendship.

Now ask God Himself and Christ why He did not deny His kindness to those who were crucifying Him, blaspheming Him, and shamefully ridiculing Him, but prayed for them and said (Luke 23:34): "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They were the most despicable kind of scoundrels, and He could well have been angry with them and punished them. If He had wanted **to be angry** with us, His blasphemous and idolatrous enemies, He would not have shed His blood for us and died for us, but would have stayed up there in heaven and said, in keeping with this gloss: "I will forgive, but I will not forget."

Anger is indeed necessary sometimes, but only in those whose responsibility it is, and only if it does not go beyond the punishment of sin and evil. Thus when you see another man sinning and you warn and urge him to stop it, such anger is Christian and brotherly, yes, even fatherly. You see pious parents punishing their children, not in order to hurt or harm them, but to keep them from mischief and evil. That is also the way the government must be angry.

Here it applies **that there should be no anger in the heart**, and yet there must be signs and marks of anger; for the voice is sharp, and the fist is rough, but the heart remains sweet and friendly, free of any malice. In other words, it is an anger of love, one that wishes no one any evil, one that is friendly to the person but hostile to the sin, as everyone can learn even from nature. But it is not right to use this as a screen for hiding and decorating the malice and envy of our heart against our neighbor, the way these sanctimonious scoundrels do and teach.

That is why He issues another warning here and shows that this commandment not only forbids **wrath**, but also requires a person cheerfully to forgive and forget injury that he has suffered. That is what God has done with us and continues to do when He forgives sin: He expunges it from the record and no longer remembers it. Still it is neither necessary nor possible for a man to forget it in the sense that he never thinks of it again, but in the sense that your heart is just as friendly toward your neighbor as it used to be before he injured you.

If the stump remains in your heart and you are not as friendly and kind toward him as you used to be, that is not forgetting or even cordially forgiving. You are still the scoundrel who comes before the altar with his sacrifice and tries to serve God even while his heart is crammed full of **anger, envy, and hate**. But very few people pay any attention to this at all. They all walk around in their beautiful mask; they fail to see the relation of their heart to this commandment, which summarily rejects any anger or ill will against the neighbor."

LIFE APPLICATION

"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."

Why is it important to remember this when you get upset by something?