



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

July 21, 2019

Jump Start # 2343

James 1:20 "for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

Our verse is a necessary reminder. Anger can get the best of us. It can even get the best of the best among us. This verse follows the quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger reminder that God tells us. Be slow to anger and anger does not get you anywhere with God.

Anger is an interesting emotion. It can come upon someone so quickly. It is an immediate reaction. Most do not plan on being angry, it just happens. It explodes upon us and in a instant it can change the course of a day, ruin the moment and lead us to things that we later regret.

I've heard most of my life that redheads are quick to anger. My hair doesn't look red these days, but when I was a kid, it sure was. Then I also heard that German backgrounds are also quick to anger. My family heritage is German. Redheaded and German is just an easy way to hide behind the fact that a person chooses to be angry. That's the point James is making. Being quick to hear is a choice. Being slow to speak is a choice. Being slow to anger is a choice. It's controlling your spirit and not allowing the outside to influence the insides and not allowing circumstances to determine your reaction to things. Forget the hair color. Forget your ancestry. There weren't very many redheaded Germans in the Bible lands in the first century. All of this is a choice. It's a matter of controlling your spirit, your tongue and your reaction.

There a lots of things that can get us angry. My wife and I were in a grocery store parking lot the other day. We saw a van back into and hit a car. The van just took off. I couldn't believe it. The lady didn't get out to see if there was any damage. She didn't leave a note. She hit hard enough that others heard it. I'm sure the person coming out and seeing a scratch on their fender was going to be mad. A few days later, I was going out to my car in a parking lot, and it looked like the same thing happened to me. There was a scratch on the front and no one around and no note. We get mad at the way some drive. We get mad at poor service. We get mad at having to wait, whether on the kids, our spouse, in the doctor's office, or in traffic. We get mad when things don't work right. We get mad when something we bought arrives broken. We get mad at politics. We get mad when our favorite team plays bad. We get mad at others. We get mad at ourselves.

In the movies, when people are mad, they go and get revenge. It makes it seem like justice is served. We sit there watching that and feel great that the bad guys got their due. But what does all of that teach us? Will we do the same when we are angry? Will we unload on someone who is simply trying to do their job? Will we use ugly words and scream at someone? Will we make the situation worse? Will we make such a mess that we have to go and apologize later?

In Ephesians, the subject of anger is dealt with. There it says do not let the sun go down upon your anger and do not give the devil an opportunity. You'd think anger was something special for our times. We tend to be a society that walks around with chips on their shoulders. Say the wrong thing and someone will yell words that will make the wallpaper peel. But anger isn't an American thing. It was a problem then and it's a problem now.

There are some things that helps:

(OVER)

First, you cannot control what happens to you. You cannot control the way people will drive, act or respond to things. Since most of the world doesn't follow Jesus, they are not concerned about anger. They don't care if they cuss you out, get in your face and explode in unhealthy manner. Many are inviting the devil into their lives daily because of their anger. Even if you stayed in bed all day, there'd be something that happens that is beyond your control.

Second, while you cannot control what happens to you, you do control the insides of you. The outsides do not have to touch the insides. You can be reasonable even though things are not right and you are upset. You do not have to allow your emotions to conquer you and get the best of you. Faith has much to do with this. Becoming like Jesus has much to do with this. In the big picture, many of these things do not matter. A scratch on my car will be forgotten in a few years. No, it's not right. No, someone should have let me know what they did. But they didn't. I can let that event redefine the rest of my life and I can tell everyone that I meet about it, or I can let it go, fix it the best I can and realize it's just a car. Now, some things are much more serious. A mate that has been having an affair. A child that was abused or bullied. Someone that stole your identity. Those are serious issues and sins. They take more faith not to be destroyed and overcome by them. But even those things do not have to make us lose control and invite Satan into our hearts.

Third, the righteousness of God is lost when we allow anger to take over. Jesus tells us in His sermon to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. With anger, I am no longer seeking first God's righteousness. I have allowed a situation to return me to my former ways. Righteousness means to be right. When a person is not right, they are wrong. Anger puts me out of bounds with God. Anger is not like God. The thoughts are not kind as they ought to be. I do not feel like praying for the other person. I do not wish well for the other person. My attention is upon how I have been hurt and how the person that caused it needs to pay. Multiple Bible passages such as how Jesus suffered (1 Pet 2), leaving room for the vengeance of God (Rom 12), the golden rule (Mt 7), all remind us that in a instant I can lose all the ground that I have gained with God. Thoughts of suing enter the mind. Thoughts of violence enter the mind. Thoughts of doing something wicked back enter the mind. And, not one of those thoughts are right.

Fourth, what really angers me the most is how anger can turn me back into the person I tried to leave. I don't like having those thoughts about others. I don't like the fiery feeling that burns in the heart when I am angry. I don't like looking back and realizing that I said things that I wish I hadn't. It angers me what anger does to me. So, we must get a hold on it. We must not let it overcome us. We must be in control. The mind must master the heart. The will must master the emotions. Faith must run deep within us. And, in time it works. It does. You find yourself catching that burning feeling in you and you immediately put it out. You catch yourself wanting to say something and you don't. You catch yourself and that's faith, will and mind staying in control. Too many allow what happens to them to dictate how they feel. Something bad happens and they explode. They justify it because something bad happened. Their day is up and down. Happy and angry. It all depends upon what happens to them. The wind blows this way and they react to that. The wind shifts and their reaction shifts. They are really out of control. Circumstances and others are determining how they feel and how they act. They follow whatever happens to them. They are reactionary.

For the child of God, it's totally different. He knows how he is supposed to be. Certainly bad things will happen. Storms, wind and floods come upon his house, but it has a different foundation. He is following the Lord. The Lord is his example. There are things that upsets him. There are things that are not right. There are times he even gets angry. But he doesn't lose his cool. He doesn't lose his focus. His mind, will and faith are always in the pilot seat of his heart. As he grows in Christ, fewer and fewer things upset him. Traffic, becomes an opportunity to pray. When people are late and he must wait, he finds useful things to do. When things break, he finds ways to make it right. He doesn't close his eyes to wrong, but he doesn't go Rambo either. He finds positive ways to make things right. He remembers at all times, and especially around people of the world, that he is a light and he is salt.

Anger does not achieve the righteousness of God. What does achieve the righteousness of God? Godly living. Grace and forgiveness. Acting like Jesus. Walking by faith. Being in control of our selves.

All of this sure makes a person look in the mirror, doesn't it.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)