

^{ESV} **James 1:19** 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 of God.

Since James notes a challenge for believers to be slow to anger, we can make an assumption that there are numerous kinds of situations noted in James that are likely to make all people angry. Further, by linking these together, “*slow to speak, slow to anger*” James likely indicates the first visible reaction of anger shows in our speaking, our use of the tongue, which is the theme of chapter 3. I will propose an inductive approach to categorizing the topics of the book from the perspective of what might make people angry or quick to be angry. Then I will look at all the themes James writes that will enable true believers to be slow to anger.

I. Possible Occasions and Causes of Anger

A. Misunderstandings about GOD can make people angry and speak rashly:

1. Some might have believed God causes us to be tempted, thus feeling that God is unfair or not good. (1:13-15)
2. Some might believe that God is not good, compassionate or merciful (contra 1:17-18; 5:11).
3. Some might believe that God wants us to have the things of the world, so desiring those things, and asking God to give them to us is ok. We expect he should answer our prayers and give us what we want (4:1-10).
4. Some may be impatient waiting for God to judge the world with justice, impatient for present injustices to be fixed 5:7-11

B. Experiencing suffering (harsh economic realities & sickness) in a fallen world can make people angry and speak rashly:

1. The rich take pride in riches, live in luxury, hoard their riches, give hypocritical encouragements about God’s help without helping the poor financially, boast about future money-making plans and look down on the poor, oppress and take the poor to court, defraud the poor by not paying them wages, murdering the poor 1:9-11, 27; 2:1-9, 15-16; 4:13-16; 5:1-6.
2. Some might get angry about sharing their resources and wealth with the poor, since they feel it belongs to them personally (2:15-16).
3. The poor (*most of the readers of James fit into the category*) are tempted to or are full of envy, coveting, cursing, grumbling, impatience, disorder and every evil practice and grief at the selfish use of wealth by the rich 1:9-11, 21, 27; 2:1-9; 15-16; 3:9, 14; 4:1-4, 11-12; 5:1-6, 9, forgetting that rich people are also made in God’s likeness 3:9
4. Some are hoping to avoid or escape trials, difficulties and physical sickness 1:2-4, 12; 5:13.
5. Wrong kinds of speech during times of suffering that believers often use (but such a person is self-deceived, hypocritical, has worthless religion & dead faith 1:13-15, 22, 26; 2:17, 26): *speaking flattery* to the rich (2:3; 12), *speaking blasphemies against God* (2:7), *speaking trite blessings* to the poor who need material help (2:15-16), *speaking correct doctrines* of the faith without the true love of Christ for others in need (2:14-26), *speaking as a teacher* for God without knowledge or integrity (3:1), *speaking boastfully about future plans* (3:5; 4:13-16), *speaking curses* against people (3:9), *speaking that causes fighting* and quarreling (4:1-2), *speaking selfish prayers* (4:3), *speaking fraudulently* to the laborers to cheat them from deserved wages (5:4), *speaking condemnations* against the righteous poor (5:6) *speaking fraud and accusations against poor in court* (2:6; 5:4, 6), *speaking rash oaths* (5:12)

II. Remedies for Rash Anger and Speech

A. Renew your heart in knowing the Triune God's . . .

1. **generosity** 1:5 in giving wisdom to those who ask in faith and reward to those who persevere under trials 1:12; 2:5
2. **goodness**, 1:17
3. **steady faithfulness** in exalting, giving grace, cleansing and drawing near to the humble 1:18; 4:5-10; 5:7-11 & opposing, judging and destroying the proud, 4:6, 12; 5:1-3
4. **compassion and mercy** overarching his mysterious providences, 5:11, 15; 4:15
5. **jealousy** in protecting his own from love of the world by giving forgiving grace to the humble, 4:5-10
6. **impartiality** toward men relative to their social position or economic status (implied in 1:11; 2:1-13; 4:12; 5:9; see Job 34:19; 2 Chron 19:7; impartiality of God in judgment in Psalm 82 may be a partial background for the rich/poor conflict in 1:27-2:9)
7. **glory** 2:1
8. **approachability & exclusive friendship** 4:8; 2:23; 4:4-5

B. Ask for God for wisdom (1:5-8) that . . .

1. **meekly receives the implanted Word** in your heart ("*let everyone be quick to hear*" 1:19) to establish your heart and speech in righteousness that will keep yourself unstained by the world 1:21, 27; 2:24; 5:8; 3:18; 4:17
2. **hates the individual** tendencies of your own quick-to-anger-heart and quick-to-speak-tongue (see II.A-E above), resists these sins, and 'puts them away' by repenting in humility and seeking the Lord's cleansing grace 1:13-15; 1:21; 4:1-10
3. **loves God** 1:12; 2:5
4. **fills the heart** with purity, peace, gentleness, openness to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, sincere 3:17-18; 4:3, 8, meekness 1:21 and patience that stills rash anger and speech 5:7-11,
5. **fills the mind** of the poor with realities of their spiritual exaltation with Christ 1:9, and *fills the mind* of the rich with realities of the temporality of riches 1:10,
6. **interprets the sufferings you experience** with joy since you understand God's good purposes for teaching patience now and future reward of the crown of life 1:2-4, 12, 17-18; 4:15; 5:11,
7. **opens the mouth** with gentle peacemaking 3:17-18, prayer in response to suffering 5:13, praise in response to blessings 5:13, requests for intercession in response to sickness 5:14, confession of our sins to one another and prayer for each other 5:16, restorative counsel for those who have wandered away from the truth 5:19-20, and
8. **opens the hand** to give generosity to the poor 1:27; 2:15-16; 3:13.