

James 1:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Analysis

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: James commands beloved brothers to be "swift to hear" (tachys eis to akousai, ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι), "slow to speak" (bradys, βραδύς), and "slow to wrath" (orgē, ὀργή). The order matters: receptive listening precedes restrained speech and controlled anger. The Greek emphasizes habitual posture.

This advice flows from regeneration: those born by the Word now humbly receive the Word. Reformed spirituality prizes the means of grace—hearing Scripture preached, meditating carefully—before speaking. Unchecked speech undermines holiness, a theme James will revisit in chapter 3.

Historical Context

House churches met in tight quarters where debates over law, Gentile inclusion, and persecution strategy could ignite fiery disputes. James, as Jerusalem's moderator, urges diaspora believers to adopt the ethos of the council in Acts 15: listening carefully before responding. Paul likewise urges believers to let words be seasoned with grace (Colossians 4:6).

Jewish wisdom literature (Proverbs, Sirach) extolled slow speech; James now roots that ethic in the gospel, showing continuity between old and new covenant wisdom.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can you cultivate habits of listening before speaking each day?
2. What triggers quick anger, and how will you slow down your responses?
3. How does this command inform your engagement online or in debates?

Interlinear Text

Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· ἔστω πᾶς ἄνθρωπος
Wherefore **brethren** **my** **beloved** **be** **every** **man**
G5620 G80 G3450 G27 G2077 G3956 G444

ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι βραδὺς
swift **to** G3588 **hear** **slow** **to** G3588 **speak** **slow**
G5036 G1519 G191 G1021 G1519 G2980 G1021

εἰς ὀργήν·
to **wrath**
G1519 G3709

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:27 (Parallel theme): He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

Proverbs 21:23 (Parallel theme): Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 10:19 (Parallel theme): In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Proverbs 14:29 (Judgment): He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Proverbs 18:13 (Parallel theme): He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Proverbs 13:3 (Parallel theme): He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Proverbs 16:32 (Parallel theme): He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Ephesians 4:26 (Judgment): Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Proverbs 15:18 (Judgment): A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Colossians 3:8 (Judgment): But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.