

“LET ME BE SLOW TO ANGER”

by Brad Hambrick, Th.M., LCCT

James 1:19-20

“Know this, my beloved brothers: 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.”

Psalm 39:1-5

I said, "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence." I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse. My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue: "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah

Matthew 12:33-37

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

CONCEPT: In Psalm 39 David is wrestling with what it means to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger (well before James 1:19-20 was written) in the presence of ungodly conflict and suffering. This poem / song strives to communicate that in order to adhere to the commands of James 1:19-20, we cannot view them as merely moral platitudes (simple do's and don'ts), but they point to the overflow of a heart (Matthew 12:33-37) fully submitted to the Lordship of Christ as the One who has the authority to author the story of our life. When this is true, then self-control and restraint are the natural overflow of our heart, not a forced action dictated by duty.

Verse 1: (Defining the Struggle)

I know Your Word is true
I must speak less and rely solely on You
I hold my tongue, I bite my lip
I strain to not let a careless word slip

I resist and fight to hold my peace
Nothing I do causes this fire to cease
My heart cries, "I'm stupid. I'm a fool.
Silence only empowers my enemies to rule."

Sinful Chorus:

I long to write the story of my life
I would revise the struggle and strife
I may not know best,
But surely I could do better than this.
How can I bow? How can I submit?
If this is what Christ asks, I'd might as well quit.

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Verse 2: (Succumbing to Temptation)

Enough I cry
I shout. I rage. I speak my peace.
My heart pours forth its searing protest
My soul cries out "God failed the test"

I muted my heart and quieted my soul
Nothing was done to lessen to my toll
Nothing may have happened when I yelled
But lack of concern is not why *I* failed

Sinful Chorus:

I long to write the story of my life
I would revise the struggle and strife
I may not know best,
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How can I bow? How can I submit?
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Verse 3: (Conviction and Initial Repentance)

Now I see what God long tried to show
My anger reflects not the One I'm made to know
My passions, my glory, my pride
Enemies all within me reside

I lack the wisdom that long days provide
On the Ancient of Days I must always rely
I am but a moment, a mere fleeting breath
God's perspective exceeds my life and my death

Redeemed Chorus:

Lord, please write the story of my life
Edit as you please, I'll pay the price
I am fleeting and foolish
Lord, You, and You only, know best
It's my pleasure to bow. I long to submit.
You are my Lord; I'd be a fool to quit.

Verse 4: (Repentance and Understanding)

Restraint is not so much a skill to be learned
Resting in you allows strife to be discerned
So naturally I make life about me
Then nothing appears as you say it should be

My battle with anger is about trusting you
Is Your story of redemption my story too?
Only then do your commandments make sense
Only then can I find peace in sweet repentance

Redeemed Chorus:

Lord, please write the story of my life
Edit as you please, I'll pay the price
I am fleeting and foolish
Lord, You, and You only, know best
It's my pleasure to bow. I long to submit.
You are my Lord; I'd be a fool to quit.