

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Are you a little slow?

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In our task oriented “get it done now” society, the person who is a little slow is not usually looked upon with favor. If you are a little slow, you may be lacking necessary knowledge, if not the intelligence, to get tasks done. If you are slow in doing things, you may be considered lazy by your goal-oriented peers.

While God does endorse swift readiness (*Titus 3:1*), and condemns laziness (*Titus 1:12-13*), He also wants people to be “slow” in some areas of our life. James writes, “...*But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*” (*James 1:19*). We must be able to shift our internal mechanisms from swift to slow as we deal with the hearing, speaking and anger.

These responses are integrated and individually highlighted when we consider our attitude towards God’s Word. We should be quick to give heed to God’s directives with appropriate application. Jesus connected “*foolish men*” with those who are “*slow of heart to believe*” (*Luke 24:25*). But when people are slow in wanting a “*thus saith the Lord,*” they may be quick to “*speak*” against God’s messenger, quickly issuing into “*wrath*” against God’s servant. This is exactly what happened in leading to the death of Stephen.

Stephen cut deeply into his hearers’ hearts with the accusation that they were manifesting the same resistance to God’s law and His spokesmen, the prophets, as their fathers did in their day (*Acts 7:51-52*). They reacted quickly with anger when Stephen spoke of seeing the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. They “*cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears and rushed upon him with one accord...*” (*Acts 7:57*).

Like the Jews, when we are slow to hear the truth from God, we may be quick to speak against His messengers and swift to manifest wrath in retaliating vengeance. To avoid this embarrassing history, the Jews should have been swift to hear God’s word presented by His messenger, and slow to speak and slow to anger.

God’s demand of slow to speak and slow to anger has great utility in maintaining harmony among brethren. We cannot be effectively hearing what a brother is saying if we are quickly replying to him before he finishes his thought. The unwillingness to be swift in hearing what another is saying while being quick to speak our mind often leads to miscommunication, invalid accusations, and a burning resentful anger in the misunderstood heart.

Try applying the inspired words of James this week in your own home. Do you really listen to what your husband, wife, or kids are saying? If you do, you may learn of a grievance that you previously had not considered. With a broader perspective, the difficulty may be calmly eased with needed additional facts. Do you immediately respond to their words with an overriding tongue? Why not put your one-sided argument aside and listen closely with an attentive ear? If you do, your argument may be better received when you reflectively respond. Do you quickly flash with anger when things do not go the way you envisioned for your family? Being slow to wrath, you may be able to see helpful solutions, instead of experiencing incinerated relationships.

Hurtful foolishness can erupt in our families when we are not listening before we speak. “*He that giveth answer before he heareth, it is folly and shame unto him*” (*Proverbs 18:13*). One is foolish to instruct others in what they should do or condemn others for doing what they did before they have heard both sides of an issue. “Folly” is “exalted” when one is not slow to anger, but “*hasty in spirit*” (*Proverbs 14:29*). May we put James’ exhortation into action. Being slow in some things is commendable and necessary.