

THOUGHTS

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SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY

HIGH-SPEED HOT HEADS

M Glancing in the rear-view mirror, I saw the large Harley Davidson motorcycle approaching at high speed, perhaps 95mph. The rider had his left arm (the right arm is used for the hand grip accelerator) extended fully and his hand formed the single-finger salute. I deduced it was not me he was signaling, as I had been in the flow of traffic and had made no lane changes. A split-second later I saw the full-sized pickup truck tailgating him, also traveling approximately 95mph and only 15 feet or so from the motorcyclist. It was obviously a dual case of road rage. They flew by in a blink. It was an extraordinarily dangerous situation, and one slip could end in the death of the motorcyclist, the pickup driver, or other drivers.

A When I was growing up, someone who lost their temper was called a hot head. There are few times when becoming visibly angry is advantageous. Almost universally, anger is a result of sinful impulses such as impatience, judgmentalism, or manipulation. Jesus rarely showed anger, and when He did it was always for perfectly righteous reasons. I find the passage, “Be angry, yet do not sin,” alternatively translated, “In your anger, do not sin” (see Colossians 3:17-31), fascinating in that it does not condemn the emotion of anger, only the sinful impulses that often accompany it. We all become angry from time to time, and some have learned to habitually use anger as a cudgel against others.

Y Less than an hour ago I was visiting with a man whose heart was broken in marriage. His wife was meek and polite before the marriage but became hostile and verbally abusive with great rage after the marriage. In less than two years it was over, partly because the man was suffering from severe medical issues associated with the stress. The longer a person is in a relationship with a person with unbridled abusive anger, the more they will be hurt. The man was especially wounded because the wife had come out of a pastor’s home and the family seemed very tight and loving prior to the marriage. The man had failed to see signs of dysfunctionality and control in the family and the woman’s life. Now, he has lifetime medical wounds from it.

2024 In that same passage in Colossians, Paul the Apostle writes, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, outcry, and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and tenderhearted to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you” (Colossians 3:31).” Note the intentionality of the Christian to purposefully, willfully, put aside such emotions. When aggravated, everyone decides whether to lose it or keep composure. The concept that an individual has no control over their anger is a lie or an excuse. We do not laugh for no reason, nor weep without cause. Likewise, we do not shift into angry mode unless we are determined to do so. The two men fighting at 95mph each decided to escalate the situation and keep it escalated.



*The Bible is God's Word...Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh...
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

Being a new person, born again, is not always easy. It requires retooling our behaviors, especially behaviors that happen when we are proud, offended, and scared. At some point, the Gospel must go from theory to application in our lives. It is when we face conflict, mistreatment, hypocrisy, neglect, and abuse that the rubber hits the road and we show whether we will act like Jesus or like maniacs going 95mph in a high-speed duel.

MAY

Here's the thing; people who are prone to angry outbursts can read an article like this and agree completely! They may even say "amen" to it! But later in the day they may explode verbally against someone else or curse them out when on the road. They may use anger and manipulation in their marriage. Sinful habits are easy to see in others and we may judge them severely. We tend not to see our own anger problems but justify them, sometimes by shifting the blame onto someone else, like the motorcyclist and truck driver. May the Lord open our eyes to see where we need to repent to head off a disaster!

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JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, VERIFIED BY WORKS

Lutherans have a touchy relationship with good works, as we historically are an offshoot of the Roman denomination which we hold has inappropriately put an emphasis on works as part of the process of forgiveness and salvation. For example, the process of receiving forgiveness from the priest involves confession, absolution (forgiveness spoken by the priest), and penance (prayers following absolution). If the believer does not follow through on their post-absolution works of prayer, they have not completed the process and sin! We disagree with the necessity of penance as a part of forgiveness and state that when a person believes in the words of absolution, that is the end of it, God has forgiven, and we receive a fresh start.

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Another example of the skewed perspective on works in the Roman church is the teaching of purgatory, a place of suffering in which those who die in faith in Christ are purged (i.e., made to suffer) from their sin until they are ready to enter God's presence. The works of the saints, i.e. prayers, offerings, and good deeds, are purportedly in reserve to apply to the saints in Purgatory. This is a damnable teaching as it diminishes the glorious atonement of Christ for our sins and draws away attention to the works of sinners. The New Testament is clear that we are saved by placing our hope in Christ's merits, not our own!

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How are we supposed to understand passages that seem to make our works a necessity? James poses the question of what good faith is without works and answers it; faith without works is dead (see James 2:14-17). But Paul says, "A man is justified by faith apart from works (see Romans 3:27-31). Who is correct? They both are!

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Christ has done the work of redeeming, justifying us through His merits. Also, all true believers will show their faith in Christ through the deeds done in faith. Try this on for size; we are justified by faith and verified by our works. As a living vine produces grapes, our faith enlivened by the Spirit of God, nourished by Jesus' righteousness, shows it is alive by our deeds (fruit). Just as the fruit is the natural outcome showing it is a fruit tree, our deeds do not create our faith but verify it!

Blessings,
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