



Links Players

JAMES — SON OF THUNDER

When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” (Luke 9:51-54, NIV)

Throughout golf history, countless players have exhibited temper tantrums on the golf course. From Tommy “Thunderbolt” Bolt to Steve “Volcano” Pate, golfers have thrown clubs into ponds, demolished tee markers with their drivers, slammed their putters over their heads, and even kicked their shoes down the fairway.

When Jesus called James the son of Zebedee (sometimes referred to as “the Elder” or “the Great”) and his brother, John, to be disciples, Mark’s gospel reports that Jesus gave them the name Boanerges which means “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17, NIV). James had a fiery temperament and a passionate zeal. As one of the “inner circle” of apostles around Jesus, James had a special place among the apostles.

When Jesus began his last trip to Jerusalem, he sent messengers ahead of him into a Samaritan village to prepare things for him. In part because of their hatred of the Jewish people, the Samaritans were not welcoming and refused any assistance. Upon learning of this rejection, James and his brother were filled with anger and indignation. They asked Jesus if he wanted them to call fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans. James’ fiery temperament, arrogance, passion, and all-consuming zeal dominated this encounter with the Samaritans.

Over the coming months, James’ zealousness and fervency were gradually softened and tempered. Herbert Lockyer in his study of the apostles, *All the Apostles of the Bible*, writes that Jesus “knew all about the natural disposition of James, and set about not its eradication but its sanctification. He harnessed the Niagara Falls in James to make him a driving force in His Kingdom.”

After Jesus’ ascension, James became one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church. He spent 14 years in the mission field and travelled as far west as Spain, bringing the gospel message to whoever he encountered. When he returned to Jerusalem, he incurred the wrath of the local religious and political leaders. As a result, King Herod Agrippa, who felt threatened by James’ powerful leadership, ordered him beheaded.

James was the first of the apostles to be martyred. History and tradition tell us that James, on the way to his execution, witnessed to the man who was holding his chains. As a result, that man became a Christian on the spot and was beheaded at the same time as James.

As I reflect on times when I have been overly zealous or passionate in sporting activities, I am filled with embarrassment and shame over the countless times when my extremely fierce competitive nature and anger raged out of control. I exhibited temper tantrums, had angry exchanges with umpires, officials, and referees, and threw several putters, baseball bats and basketballs.

It is not easy to change a lifetime of less-than-exemplary behavior. But when I look at the fiery, zealous, passionate Son of Thunder and see what a radical transformation he underwent, I have hope. I realize that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, my passion and zeal can become strengths rather than weaknesses.

In James, we see a fervent and enthusiastic disciple whose overall personality was tempered and shaped by Jesus’ love and teaching. He was transformed, and his passion, zeal and dynamic enthusiasm were used to expand the Kingdom. How can we allow our zeal and our passion to work positively for the Kingdom?

--

Mark “Ole” Olson

Copyright 2022 Links Players International

The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.