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"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31)

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Anger and rule of the Spirit

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How many of us have ever been angry? What made us angry? Where does anger come from? Let us try to answer these questions by beginning our study from Proverbs 15:18.

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

The word “wrathful” has a reference to burning anger, fury or rage. We have all experienced anger at one time or another in our lives. For some people anger is a regular practice that moves them to be ready to fight at the drop of a hat. The Bible teaches us that this combative spirit is from our depraved sinful nature that we inherited from Adam (Titus 3:3; Rom 1:29-31; 3:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:22). Not only does our sin nature produce anger, but also hatred, jealousy, slandering to having revengeful motivations. We can all certainly relate to these negative tendencies since they all come to us naturally. We do not have to be taught to be angry or vengeful; it comes naturally for all human beings. These tendencies are based on some form of prideful arrogance or another.

Our sin nature is based in conceitful pride and self-centeredness and demands to dominate others (Pro. 13:10; Phil 2:3-4). A reactive quick-tempered anger is an impulsive mental attitude that tries to impose control over others and damage their reputation. This impulsive spirit of anger desires vengeance for any offence or wrong it feels it has suffered and the Epistle of James teaches us its source (*James 4:1-5*)

From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? (KJV Jas. 4:1)

When Adam sinned he acquired a sinful depraved nature and he has passed it on to all humanity since his fall. The sin nature has continued to be transmitted genetically by the male through procreation (Gen. 5:3). In Genesis 5:3 when it states the Adam “begat a son in his own likeness after his own image,” it is referring to Adam’s descendants being born in Adam’s likeness after the fall. As a result, we now all have the contamination of the sin nature residing in our cell structure of our body. This explains why it is so easy to be angry, hateful or jealous; it is in our “members.”

Therefore, the wrathful man of Proverbs 15:18 is an individual who gets angry at the slightest provocation. Of course, a wrathful man’s anger only inflames the person who offended him in return, and as the saying goes, the fight is on in the form of a major conflict. Thus, the wrathful man causes strife everywhere he goes because of his reactive impulsive anger.

Our sin nature will cause us to react to the most insignificant things such as someone cutting in front of us in traffic to them shining their car's high beams at us. Unfortunately, when children are allowed by parents to have these negative impulsive tendencies of their sin nature to continue, they only become stronger and the child goes into their adult lives with these flaws. This is the reason that God's Word mandates parents not to spare the rod of discipline to a child and to do so is a lack of love (Proverbs 13:24). A parent who truly loves their child does not overlook their faults but takes steps to correct them!

Therefore, in contrast to the wrathful man, a man that is slow to anger defuses negative feelings and ends confrontations. Such a man overlooks offences of antagonists and disperses away any rage instead of impulsively reacting in hostility. What could have escalated into a violent irruption is quickly appeased into a civilized and peaceful resolution. We have to see it for what it is and choose not to follow these reactive impulses.

An angry man is foolish because his emotional outbursts disregard wisdom and common sense (Pro. 14:17,29; Eccl 7:8-9). Such individuals should be avoided because, not only can they be dangerous, but will corrupt a virtuous spirit of the wise who hate fighting (Pro. 17:14,19; 19:19; 29:22; 14:7; 22:24-25; I Cor 15:33).

*"He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated."
(KJV Pro. 14:17)*

*"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly."
(KJV Pro. 14:29)*

The one thing that has to be learned by the wise man is to maintain a rule over their spirit by avoiding anger (Pro. 14:29; Jas 1:19-20). As a matter of fact, Proverbs 16:32 tells us that a man who can maintain a rule of his spirit is greater than a warrior who can defeat a city single-handedly!

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

The word "mighty" in Proverbs 16:32 has a reference to a mighty warrior and "ruleth his spirit" connotes having command of the emotions. In other words, mastering our anger is a greater accomplishment than a mighty warrior who masters a city. The greatest victory anybody can obtain is that of conquering their anger and is the key to overlooking past the transgressions of others (Pro. 19:11). A wise man that has mastered his emotional anger understands the power of words to arouse anger in others or to dispel it. It is only through a soft answer that the wise man will neutralize a potentially combative situation by diffusing another person's rage (Pro. 15:1). Anger only blinds our minds to misread situations and causes us to say wrong and dumb things.

The Lord himself gave us the greatest example of a person who has conquered their anger when He taught to offer the other cheek in response to provocation (Matt 5:38-42). The wise man does not retaliate when provoked, but instead places the wrongs he may suffer before the

courtroom of heaven before the Lord who will ultimately resolve any injustices (Rom. 12:17-21). The Lord not only taught this principle but also lived it during His time here on earth through the injustice that He suffered through His arrest, despicable trial and death on the cross (1 Pet. 2:19-23).

19) For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20) For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21) For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: (KJV 1 Pet. 2:19-23)

If anyone had a right to retaliate at unjust treatment, it certainly would have been the Lord. Yet, the Lord symbolized what it meant to endure unjust suffering. Although He could have destroyed His enemies with a word from His mouth, He suffered without uttering a word and committed Himself completely to the Father's plan. He did not utter a word during some of the most excruciating suffering anybody could ever endure. He was beaten beyond recognition, skinned alive and crucified. Yet, we demand an apology when we get our feelings hurt at the slightest thing or are ready to fight because someone looks at us the wrong way or has taken our parking spot!

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