

Road Rage

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:” (James 1:19 AV)

What makes you angry? Where is your boiling point? It seems you can no longer listen to the daily news without several headlines involving senseless violence as more and more people allow their emotions to rule them. The Bible has a lot to say about anger and it is easy to uncover God’s intention for His people in dealing with this most base of human emotions.

God has never required anything of man that God did not first give to man. The Bible tells us that we are to be angry and not sin. We are not let the sun go down on our anger. Because control of anger is commanded in the Bible it is not impossible to control anger because God does not ask His people to do the impossible.

In classic anger management we are taught to pause and ask questions of ourselves. The first question is, “Why am I angry?” We can always answer this question and at least self justify why we are angry. The second question is, “What do I want to accomplish by being angry?” This is also an easy question since the source of the anger has been identified the answer of what we desire to change or happen is already present in our minds. The third point in classic anger management however can be a bit more elusive. This point asks how we can reach the goal presented in question number two. The last step is to take the plan of action developed in step three and work it and any alternatives that we may have thought of in step three. The first point is the biblical beginning of controlling this bondage of the devil. Ephesians 7:9 says, “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of fools.”

The Bible skips question two and modifies step three in providing the plan of action without the input of the person involved. The Bible tells us to give food to our enemies, to give drink if they are thirsty, and to love our enemies. It is hard to be angry with a person while you are providing for their needs, caring, and loving them. When we add this direction to take care of and love our enemies with the admonition to not take vengeance into our hands that this belongs to the Lord and that the Lord will require recompense we have the recipe for a life where we are in control of our emotions and wrath does not rule for even a moment.

The Psalmist says “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in anywise to do evil” (Psalm 37:8). How many of us consider being angry sinful and to be avoided as an evil thing? When we understand there is no so-called righteous anger and that all anger is sinful perhaps we will take more care to apply the answer of the Bible to this area of our lives. Most point to Christ cleansing the temple and say that Christ was angry over the pollution of the temple and expressed this anger in driving the men from the temple and over turning the tables of the money changers. This is a wrong answer and not the context of this well known action of Christ while in the flesh. The exchanging of money from various nations for temple money was an innovation of the temple elite to extract money

from those who obeyed God in attending the annual feasts. Likewise God in Deuteronomy directed those who lived too far from the temple to take their sacrifice with them to sell their goods and take the money to the temple, not go and buy an animal approved by the temple sect for sacrifice. The money tables and animals for sacrifice were not supposed to be there. Christ did not display an uncontrolled emotion, but took action to do what needed to be done. This is not righteous anger, it is daring to be bold and obey God even when it goes against those in authority and popular beliefs. Anger has no place in the life of a believer. Satan can and does use this beast lying just beneath the surface of the flesh in the pride each person has to cause them to sin against God.

The devil would steal your joy and peace. When he can tempt you into sin he hinders the blessings of God and your joy will not be full as the Bible says it should be in Christ. Classical anger management works well for most people. Biblical control of all things pertaining to our lives brings peace and contentment that is not available outside of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There is no reason for a believer to ever lose control and become entrapped in the rage of the heathens around them. On the surface secular anger management will help a person maintain control. Biblical avoidance of sin and obeying the directions of God concerning our relationship with not only each other as believers, but the whole of the creation will bring love, joy, and peace to the forefront in our lives. This is merely the manifestation of the fruit of the Holy Spirit who resides within the heart of all believers.

So the next time someone is getting on your last nerve and you feel the temperature rising, remember anger is a tool of the devil and sin. Then recall the words of James, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak. Slow to wrath: For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20). Self control feels good to us and it too is merely the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in us (Gal. 5:22). "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24). This is written in the past tense. Have you crucified your lusts and taken control of your life yet? There is no alternative to being angry and not sinning as some are desirous of believing because we are admonished to not let the sun go down on our anger. Anger is a device of the devil working in the flesh and would rob us of the joy that is ours in Christ. Anger destroys relationships and the harmony within the body of Christ. Anger is evil by nature and belongs to the flesh not the new person in Christ you are. God says we can do this, therefore, let God be true and all men liars.

Dr. Chuck Baynard August 2004