

Thursday Evening Bible Class.

16th March 2023

Slow to Anger

Proverbs 16:32

Dear Brothers and Sisters

On the plan unfortunately we have a wrong reference, and we looked at that reference on the 18/11/21 So we have chosen to look at Proverbs 16:32. *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

There are other passages such as Proverbs 15:18: *A wrathful man stirs up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeases strife.* Also Proverbs 14:29 which we looked at on 27/11/03: *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalts folly.*

The first passage we have identified is particularly useful, as overcoming a city, and looking for a city, are terms which cause us to think about our own citizenship.

But first we may look at some examples of anger in scripture, and see what great good it did to the folk who indulged in it.

Cain. His resentment at being outshone by a younger brother simmered away, and turned into a smouldering anger. This was no flash in the pan, nor a result of irritableness, but premeditated, and nurtured resentment. This erupted into anger, where it could have been diverted and calmed down should he have taken time to think things through properly. In the end, his anger led to murder, and the blood of his brother still cries out from the ground. The mark of Cain is still upon those who allow this sin to rise up in their foreheads.

Moses. This was the man described as very meek – Numbers 12:33 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) He demonstrated faith, compassion,

kindness and patience to an enormous degree, though sore provoked. A wonderful man. Yet he was given the gift of the Spirit, and strengthened physically and mentally by the Lord for the great work in which he did. He demonstrated the weakness of the human condition, when he was provoked just once too often in a day. *Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?* He shouted at the people. On so many counts, that statement was wrong, and as he smote the rock, he also defiled the pattern God had ordained. For him he paid the price. He was not permitted to enter the land. This was different anger to that of Cain. It was instant an uncontrolled, and over as quick as it arose. Immediately he accepted the punishment with grace and humility, and most surely will enter the land. But look at the damage it caused to him personally. What a tragic situation. Just a few seconds of loss of control.

Balaam. A man corrupt to the core, with no judgement decided to continue in his relationship with the enemies of Israel. In continuing in his way, God placed obstacles in the way. So fixed was he in his self-will and obstinacy he became blind to the obvious, and began lashing his donkey with a rod when she stopped suddenly. He was so blind with rage he didn't even react when the dumb ass started talking with him. This shows the unreasonableness of a man who cannot control his rage, who though he basked in a reputation of being some kind of a sage or religious guru in the eyes of the nations, in fact he had no wisdom at all, and had no self control whatsoever.

David and Nabal. David became angry and acted hastily, indignant that his kindness at showing protection to sheepshearers had been interpreted as banditry, by a sneering pompous fool, secure in his riches. David ordered his soldiers to arm themselves and prepare for action. In his hot-headedness he was met by the man's wife, who reasoned with him, and calmed him down, preventing him from sin. David was very grateful for this, but it shows that an angry man, who has a good heart, can be reasoned with if approached with

diplomacy. But Nabal by contrast, when he heard his wife was giving handouts and gifts of his estate to these good for nothing brigands, he died of heart attack in his apoplectic rage! A nice contrast for us to think about.

Ahab. Another man who wasn't very good at controlling anger and wrath. He allowed it to fester - when he didn't get what he wanted , and sulked, staring at the wall like a spoilt brat. He cheerfully took the vineyard after the owner had been murdered. His anger led to the death of a good man. Ahab died an inglorious death, dogs licking up his blood.

Jonah. *Doest thou well to be angry?* No you don't! was the lesson Jonah was being told. He became angry he believed for right reasons. The enemy of his people were being given a chance to repent, and it meant these people of Nineveh would be invading his country again. What was God doing? In this heightened sense of anxiety, he became very angry when he sat under a lovely leafy plant giving him shade, when the thing flopped over in the midday sun exposing him, because a worm ate its root. Anger arises when we do not understand, and things do not go in accordance with the plan we have in mind. It doesn't do us well to be angry, when we are do not understand, instead to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show us today.

Asa 2 Chronicles 16:10. Asa was reproved by setting up an alliance with wicked Baasha of Israel. Though Asa had proved himself to be a faithful, wise and capable ruler, one thing he didn't like was being told off in front of others and humiliated. There is always something that flicks the switch within us. It is good to find it before anger finds it first. The consequence of Asa's tantrum was that he was diseased in his feet for the rest of his life.

Uzziah. Not able to learn the lesson of his ancestor, he allowed a sense of self importance to overcome him. Again, when he was

rebuked before all, the humiliation was too much for him, and he became very angry, with those who were rightfully trying to redirect his enthusiasm. As his face became red with anger, the redness turned to leprosy, and he was hustled swiftly into disgrace, forever defiled. The real cancer though was his pride which caused the anger in the first place.

In these examples we have seen anger being caused by: resentment, humiliation, envy, irritation, lack of understanding, extreme provocation.

In only one or two of the cases above are there any mitigating excuses – we think of Jonah and Moses. However, Jesus taught in Matthew 5:22: *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:* ... The Apostle Paul lists wrath – anger – along with murder, hatred and witchcraft as being amongst sins which will be an obstacle to the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:20-21) He says emphatically in another place -: Ephesians 4:31: *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* He almost repeats the same words to the Ecclesia at Colossae: Colossians 3:8: *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

All of the above passages relate to a state of mood whereby we are out of control. The mouth is spouting out stuff which comes out before we even think it, it is expressing built up emotions which normally we would suppress, for reasons we know as irrational thoughts, unfair thoughts, but when we are angry those all come out, laced with unkindness and hurtful shoutings, as we either try to justify ourselves, defend ourselves, or retaliate – all reasons which are not how Jesus would have reacted or behaved at any time anywhere. All of the above passages reflect the danger that comes upon us, that anger causes us to sin. The examples given show how anger escalates into sin very quickly indeed.

Why the Proverb advises Proverbs 14:17: *He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.* Anger is always triggered. We have seen the array of triggers in the examples given. The Man and Woman of God identifies their own personal triggers, - weaknesses, and instead of getting angry – builds up a defence against the rising rush of impatience/ irritability/ pride/ or whatever it might be, and remains calm, or manages to direct the force of their words without being hurtful unkind, and spiteful.

At times anger is necessary, to show displeasure, distaste, disagreement – especially when the Truth of God's word is being attacked. Jesus showed a controlled passion, a controlled Spirit, when he overturned the money changers tables, and threw out bundles and goods, chased out animals and birds and people from the temple precincts. It was a sustained demonstration of controlled anger. Nehemiah also as Governor even describes himself in chapter 13:25 *And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair,...* at no time does scripture censor him as sinning, but his action is presented as commendable.

So Paul says carefully: Ephesians 4:26 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:* The instruction is to be slow to anger. Here Paul says Be angry... and sin not. There is a time to be angry, but that does not include triggers induced by our own emotions, but instead anger in defence of that which is right, noble and true. Once we can control our own emotions, then we can defend the Will of God. It is very hard, and difficult to learn control of anger, but once it has been mastered, then the same principles can be applied to ruling and guiding others – in the cities which the Lord Jesus will award to those who have proved to be faithful in these things which are least.

Brother Terry

