

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

Lesson – 6b

"The Problem of Anger – Part Two"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Mark Twain once said, "Everyone is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody."
 - A. In our last lesson, we looked at the righteous side of anger and learned that we don't need to be afraid of this feeling.
 1. Sometimes, in fact, it's quite appropriate to make this kind of response.
 - B. However, in this lesson, we want to travel to "the dark side" of this emotion we call anger.
 1. And in this study, we want to learn as much as we can about the kind of anger than can put us into an emotional – not to mention a spiritual – tailspin toward destruction.
 - a. We're going to look at the kind of anger which is never justified – and is always wrong.
 2. This kind of anger isn't always manifested in throwing things across the room, or screaming at the top of our lungs at somebody.

- a. I think we would all agree THAT kind of anger is not suitable for ANY godly man or woman.
3. But the kind of anger we want to explore now is far more subtle than these kinds of emotional outbursts.
 - a. However, even though it might be more subtle, this anger cause catastrophic emotional damage to ourselves, and permanently damage our relationship with others.
 - b. But even more serious, this kind of anger will most CERTAINLY destroy our relationship with God.
4. Hopefully, after we've studied this kind of anger, we'll all be able to recognize areas where we may be letting anger get out of control in our lives, and hopefully discover ways to bring it under subjection once again.

BODY:

- I. The first question we need to consider is "What kind of anger is UN-justified in God's eyes?" Although there are probably many we could discuss, let me suggest what I call THE BIG THREE.
 - A. First, anger is unjustified when it comes from the wrong motive.
 1. There are any number of motives that can cause the wrong kind of anger to erupt within us.

- a. One is jealousy.
2. In Luke chapter 15, we find a familiar story with a somewhat less familiar character, who is the perfect picture of jealous anger.
 - a. To set the stage for understanding this kind of anger we need to understand the background.
 - (1). Jesus tells the story of a father who had two sons, and the younger wanted to take the inheritance and leave home – an inheritance that would eventually come to him anyway someday.
 - (a). The trouble is that the younger son wanted his inheritance NOW!
 - (2). The father did as the younger son requested, and gave him and his older brother their inheritance in advance.
 - (3). The younger son immediately left home, went into a distant land, spent everything he had throwing party after party, and lived a very immoral life – until everything was gone.
 - (4). When a severe famine struck that land, the young man ended up getting a job feeding pigs, but he

never forgot how much better he had it back home.

(5). So, he humbled himself returned.

(6). Upon his arrival, his father saw him coming, had compassion on him, ran to him and welcomed him back as his son – restoring his rightful place in the family.

3. Where we want to pick up the story is the reaction of the older son in verses 25 through 30.

a. **Luke 15:25-30** – *"Now his older son was in the field.*

And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who

has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

- (1). Notice the language the older son used – not "my brother" but "this son of yours!"
 - (2). The older brother's jealousy had burned the bridge between himself and his younger brother.
4. This kind of jealousy can do the same thing to us.
 - a. When someone we know receives a commendation, a promotion or gets the attention we think we deserve – our response may be jealousy.
 - b. When that happens, we need to STOP and ASK ourselves – "Why am I getting jealous – which a form of ANGER (jealous anger)? What's my MOTIVE? Am I filled with PRIDE, and wanting this person FAIL?"
 5. Recognizing anger that comes from wrong motives – like jealousy, pride and a desire for revenge – will be the first step toward dealing with it properly.
 - a. Recognizing it is one thing, but admitting it and confessing it to God is something else.
 - b. But that's how we bring this kind of anger under control – by confessing it to the Lord and asking Him to help us deal with it.

- B. Second, anger is unjustified when it comes because things don't go our way.
1. It seems that when things don't go our way, we get all bent out of shape -- we become upset, angry, perhaps even filled with rage.
 2. This kind of anger is similar to the kind of anger Jonah experienced as recorded in the first chapter of Jonah.
 - a. **Jonah 1:1-3** – *Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*
 3. God had commissioned Jonah the prophet to go to the city of Nineveh and preach to them in an attempt to get them to repent.
 - a. However, Jonah wanted God to destroy these wicked people instead of offering them any chance for repentance – they were the enemies of Israel, and were

a very corrupt and wicked empire (the Babylonian Empire).

4. So, Jonah decided to hop on a ship and sail away in the opposite direction. We know the story:
 - a. A storm arose, and the men on board the ship learned that the storm was because Jonah was trying to run away from God.
 - b. So they tossed him overboard, and he was immediately swallowed by a great fish.
 - c. For the next three days, he spent his time sloshing around in sea weed and ocean water in the stomach of the fish.
 - d. Three days later he was vomited up on the shore of the VERY land from which he was trying to escape.
5. After that ordeal, Jonah decided it would be wise to do what God commanded – so HE PREACHED to the people of Nineveh, and THEY ALL REPENTED.
 - a. But, instead of being happy about the conversion of a whole city (the capitol city of an evil empire), Jonah fumed with anger.
 - b. **Jonah 3:10-4:1** – *Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the*

disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.

- (1). Jonah didn't get the destruction he wanted, so he stomps off, builds himself a shelter and sits down to pout – hoping that the conversion of the people of Nineveh would be short-lived so he could turn around to God and say, "See, I TOLD YOU SO!"

6 But that's not the end of the story.

- a. **Jonah 4:6-9** – *And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. 7 But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. 8 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." 9 Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"*

- b. Can't you just hear him whining? "I got upset, so I came here to cool off, and You took that away too! I have every reason to be mad!"
- 7. Jonah was consumed with the kind of anger we feel when we get a flat tire, when someone on the freeway cuts us off, when it rains on the day we planned to go to Disneyland!
 - a. Underneath all this, we're muttering, "I've got my rights! This isn't fair! I have the right to have what I want!"
 - b. Tell me – WHERE IS IT WRITTEN THAT WE HAVE OUR RIGHTS in those kinds of situations?
 - (1). Those kinds of demands come from selfish, conceited, self-center people – people like Jonah.
- 8. The next time you don't get your way – try shrugging the whole thing off, and look for a little humor in the situation.
 - a. Learning to laugh at some of our misfortunes is not only healthy – IT'S BIBLICAL.
 - b. **Proverbs 17:22a** – Solomon says, "*A joyful heart is good medicine.*"
 - (1). Laughter can make a world of difference in dealing with times when we don't get our way.
- C. Third, anger is unjustified when we react too quickly.

1. Have you ever gotten upset over something before you investigated the facts, or got upset over something you THOUGHT would happen, but it didn't?
2. Solomon offer some very practical advice in this area found in the seventh chapter of Ecclesiastes.
 - a. **Ecclesiastes 7:8-9** – Solomon says, *"The end of a matter is better than its beginning, patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit. Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools."*
3. James, the Lord's brother, also offers some inspired advice about reacting too quickly.
 - a. **James 1:19a** – *"Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."*
4. I realize many of us live on the brink of irritation because we're caught up in a fast-paced world.
 - a. We have over-committed schedules that drive us into some kind of frenzied pace, where we often hear only HALF of what someone says before we respond.
5. We've all had occasions where we're jumped to some conclusions, got upset about something we thought was going to happen – only to end up making a complete fool of

ourselves, and then needing to apologize to someone we've hurt in the process.

6. Unfortunately, instead of being "*quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger,*" far too many of us have it all turned around – we're "slow to hear, quick to speak and even quicker to anger."
 - a. Until we get this problem straightened out, we will never become mature men and women of God.

II. So, let's turn our attention now to look at some practical ways to deal with our anger – with anger that is never justified.

A. Thomas Jefferson, that great American statesman, had a home-grown way of dealing with anger.

1. He said, "*When angry, count to ten before you speak.... if very angry count to a hundred.*"

B. I'm not sure counting to anything is going to always dispel really INTENSE anger – so let's turn to the wisdom of Solomon and see what divine instructions he gives. Let me suggest five.

1. First, learn to ignore petty disagreements.
 - a. Pride has a way of making even the smallest offenses appear to be unforgivable sins. But Solomon offers a solution.

- b. **Proverbs 19:11 – (NASB)** -- Solomon said, "*A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.*"
 - c. So instead of nurturing petty offenses, leave them alone to shrivel up and die.
2. Second, don't have close associations with anger-prone people.
- a. Few things have as much influence on us as friendships. But Solomon offers a solution here as well.
 - b. **Proverbs 22:24-25 – (NASB)** -- Solomon said, "*Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself.*"
 - c. It's really that simple – to avoid a lifestyle of anger, avoid the constant company of people prone to anger.
3. Third, keep a close check on your tongue.
- a. When the tongue is used in anger, it can strike with all the destruction of a lightning bolt, and it can spread fires through relationships that leave only charred memories. And once again, Solomon provides inspired advice here as well.

- b. **Proverbs 15:1 – (NASB)** – Solomon says, *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*
- c. If you don't keep a close guard on your tongue, you'll soon find yourself saying things you wish you hadn't.
- 4. Forth, cultivate honest communication without letting anger build up.
 - a. There is only ONE WAY to keep anger from creating barriers in relationships, and that's to have OPEN and HONEST communication – BOTH WAYS. This is why Solomon says:
 - b. **Proverbs 27:6 – (NASB)** – *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."*
 - c. Remember one thing though – this communication goes BOTH ways.
 - (1). You may need to hear things about YOURSELF as much as you feel the need to tell others about THEIR own faults.
- 5. Finally, control your anger or it will destroy you.
 - a. Wrong motives, things not going our way, hasty reactions – these are a few of the ways unrighteous

anger can overpower our hearts. And finally, Solomon says:

- b. **Proverbs 25:28 – (NASB)** – *"Like a city that is broken into and without walls, is a man who has no control over his spirit."*
- c. Self control is the wall of protection that surrounds our hearts and keeps these sinful kinds of anger from taking over our lives.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Remember the admonition of the apostle Paul regarding anger? He said, *"Be angry, and sin not"* (**Ephesians 4:26**)
 - A. That verse really sums it all up.
 - 1. There is always to be a BALANCE in the life of the Christian – even when it comes to some highly charged emotion like anger.
 - a. Unfortunately, some of us are way off balance because our lives are characterized by only the first half of that verse – "BE ANGRY!"

- b. Others may be out of balance the other direction, thinking there is NEVER a place for anger.
 - c. While one extreme causes US to sin, the other extreme causes us to do little or nothing ABOUT sin – both lead to unrighteousness.
- II. Although there were instances in the life of Jesus where He clearly became angry – there was one notable time when He COULD HAVE, but DIDN'T.
- A. It was when He was carrying His cross to Calvary while people in the crowd covered his beaten and bleeding body with spit – and moments later, when he was hanging on that same cross, and the same people were mocking his suffering with insults.
 - 1. If it had been you or me, we probably would have called down fire out of heaven to consume them on the spot.
 - 2. But Jesus simply looked at them and said, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (**Luke 23:34**)
 - B. When Jesus COULD HAVE become angry, He didn't.
 - 1. Do you know why?
 - 2. What He was going through – all the pain and insults He was suffering – was for the very people who were inflicting the pain and insults.

- a. They were dying in their sins, and didn't realize Jesus had come for the very purpose of leading them back to God.
- C. He's still the only way back to God.
1. In fact, Jesus is the only way TO God: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* **(John 14:6)**
 2. Do you need to come to the Father in heaven:
 - a. By either submitting to the will of God in obedience to Jesus Christ, making Him your Lord and Savior?
 - b. Or by coming back to your first love, and recommitting yourself to serve the Lord more faithfully in the future than you have in the past?