

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

Lesson – 6a

"The Problem of Anger – Part One"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. So far in our series of studies on problems, we've focused our attention on problems that, in one way or another, are bad.
 - A. But now we need to face a particular emotional situation which is not always bad – in fact, sometimes it's absolutely necessary.
 1. But when this particular emotional response is not channeled in the proper direction and controlled in the right way – it can be devastating.
 2. This particular emotional response is ANGER.
 - B. Since this is such an important subject matter, we want to take more than one lesson to deal with it.
 1. There is a great deal that the Scriptures tell us as about anger.
 - a. And hopefully, some of what we're going to discover may help us dispel the myths that we've created about this subject.

- II. Our first step in separating myth from reality is to properly define anger.
 - A. Webster defines "anger" as:
 - 1. "A strong feeling of displeasure resulting from injury, mistreatment, opposition, etc., and usually showing itself in a desire to fight back at the supposed cause of this feeling."
 - B. However, this definition doesn't help us a lot, because we all generally recognize that there are different levels or phases of anger.
 - 1. In fact, Psychologists tell us there are actually FIVE phases of anger.
 - a. Mild Irritation -- a feeling of minor discomfort brought on by someone or something.
 - b. Indignation – frustration over something unfair or unreasonable.
 - c. Wrath – a strong desire to avenge or punish, which never goes unexpressed.
 - d. Fury – a state that suggests violence and temporary loss of control.
 - e. Rage – the most dangerous form, where acts of violence are committed by people scarcely aware of what they're doing.
 - (1). Like the 46 year old son, who came back into the Emergency Room of a San Diego area hospital

after his father died there , and with a handgun opened fire on several employees, killing two and seriously injuring four others.

2. Out of the five phases of anger, perhaps the ones we're most afraid of are the last three – Wrath, Fury and Rage.
 - a. These are the monsters we try to keep locked in the cellars of our hearts – fearing that if we let them out, we will never be able to control them.
 - b. This is really nothing more than denial – because we all have these monsters lurking in the dark recesses of our hearts.
3. Denying reality has never been God's way of dealing with problems.
 - a. Let's turn to the Scriptures to see how the Lord wants us to deal with this very powerful emotion.

BODY:

- I. Too often, to be considered at "good Christian," we're made to feel that we can never get angry or upset about anything.
 - A. So, we try to repress our feelings.
 1. Unfortunately, this repressed anger begins to transform itself into other monsters like bitterness and revenge.

- a. In time, our whole mental, emotional, physical and spiritual lives have been ravaged.
- B. However, rather than agreeing with the tradition that says we need to deny and repress our anger, the apostle Paul said something quite the contrary.
1. Quoting from **Psalm 4:4**, Paul actually encouraged it!
(Ephesians 4:26-27)
 - a. With just a couple of words, Paul completely destroys one of the great myths of the Christian faith – that we should NEVER get angry!
 - b. If nothing remained in this verse except these first couple of words, we could actually end the commandment of God with an exclamation point: "BE ANGRY!"
 - (1). "Get mad!" Can you imagine God actually saying, "Get mad?"
 - (2). That's just what He says!
 - c. And in the words that follow, Paul dispels the myth that all anger is sin – PROVIDING THAT the anger is handled in the proper way.

- II. Understand that the Scriptures actually command anger, let's make some general observations about anger itself.
 - A. First – Anger is a God-given emotion.
 - 1. I think we're all grateful that God has allowed us to experience certain emotions.
 - a. But when it comes to anger, we feel compelled to fight it.
 - b. Somehow we feel that we will become more like God if we never got angry.
 - 2. This leads me to the second point.
 - a. Since anger is a God-given emotion, then...
 - B. Second – Anger is not, IN ITSELF, sinful.
 - 1. Eighteen times in the Old Testament alone, the anger of the Lord is recorded.
 - a. Eighteen times God got angry over sin, and not one of those times did He ever sin.
 - 2. In the New Testament, Jesus walked into the Temple, grabbed some cords and made a whip, then drove the moneychangers out of the Temple with that same feeling of anger. (**John 2:13-16**)
 - a. **John 2:13-16** – *“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found*

in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!' Then His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.'"

3. And now, God is saying to His sons and daughters in Christ to do the same thing: "Be angry, and yet do not sin."
 - a. In other words, "Be angry, but don't carry that anger to the point of where it becomes a sin."

C. Third – Anger must have safeguards.

1. You may not realize it, but all hot water heaters have a safety feature known as a "pop-off valve."
 - a. When excessive heat and steam build up and create too much pressure inside, the pop-off valve automatically blows to release the pressure.
 - b. If something happens, and that valve becomes inoperative – the result will be a catastrophic explosion.

2. What about you and me – what do we do when the anger is boiling inside of us?
 - a. Instead of "popping-off" (which only works well for hot water heaters), we're told to do something else.
3. Look at Paul's advice again in **Ephesians 4:26-27** – he gives us two practical safeguards for keeping anger from becoming sin.
 - a. First -- *"Do not let the sun go down on your wrath (anger)."* **(v. 26)**
 - (1). The setting of the sun is an expression which signified the close of a day.
 - (2). Therefore, do not allow that anger to continue beyond the close of the day – which is another way of saying, "Get over it, put it behind you, and forget it."
 - (3). Now, this is easier for some people to do than it is for others.
 - (a). Most men seem to have an easier time getting angry, then getting over it just as quick – not all, but most.

- (b). Unfortunately, ladies, you have this uncanny ability to not only remember the incident 12 months later, but to remember the exact time of day, the place where it happened, who was there, what they were wearing, what the weather was like, and who said what.
- (4). Paul says, "PUT IT TO REST! FORGET IT! PUT IT BEHIND YOU AND LEAVE IT THERE!"
- b. Second – *"Do not give place to the devil."* **(v. 27)**
 - (1). This is saying, "Don't give the devil any room in your emotions for him to lead you into the sin of bitterness or wrath.
 - (2). Uncontrolled anger is a wide-opened door for Satan to enter our hearts.
 - (a). And never think that he doesn't constantly wait for the opportunity.
 - (3). It reminds me of the cats my daughters used to have.
 - (a). They constantly wait at the front door for a chance to run inside.

- (b). If you let them know they're not welcomed, they don't try.
- (c). But turn your back on them for a **SECOND**, while the door is even cracked, and they're in like a shot!

III. With all of this as a background, let's ask the question, "When is anger justified?"

A. We've all gotten angry over trivial things, and certainly no one considers **THAT** kind of anger to be justified. So when **IS** anger justified? For brevity sake, let me suggest three occasions.

1. First -- When God is deliberately disobeyed.

a. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, after spending 40 days and nights in the presence of Jehovah, he saw something that caused his anger to snap like a twig.

(1). **Exodus 32:19-20** – *“So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and*

ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.”

- b. Moses became intensely angry – enraged, if you please – over the Israelites willful and open rebellion.
 - c. This same kind of justifiable anger should be aroused in the hearts of every Christian today who sees the will of God openly disobeyed by those who claim to be believers.
2. Second – When we are robbed of our liberty.
- a. One good example is in **Galatians 2:4-5** when certain legalists (*"false brothers"* as Paul calls them) *"infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves."*
 - (1). Paul went on to say in the next verse, *"We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain in you."*
 - b. Although Paul doesn't describe himself as being angry over this situation, listen to the tenor of his words one more time: *"We did not give in to them for a moment!"*
 - (1). I have no doubt but that Paul was ready to take the gloves off over these false brethren who were

trying to rob new Christians of the grace of Jesus Christ.

c. In fact, he goes on to say in **verses 11 through 13** that when Peter acted cowardly in standing in defense of these new gentile Christians, Paul had to rebuke Peter to his face.

(1). **Galatians 2:11-13 (NIV)** – *“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.”*

(2). Something tells me that wasn't a very peaceful, pleasant conversation.

3. Third – When parents are unfair and unreasonable with their children.

- a. This is a very sensitive issue between children and their parents, but the apostle Paul tells parents (primarily fathers) something they need to remember.
 - (1). **Ephesians 6:4** (NIV) – “*Do not **exasperate** your children*”
 - (2). **Colossians 3:21** (NIV) - “*Do not **embitter** your children*”
- b. Paul makes it crystal clear that fathers have a tendency to exasperate their children.
 - (1). This happens when dads become impatient and don't take time to understand the feelings of their children.
 - (2). Paul's talking to fathers who get into their "steamroller" mentalities, and flat- ten important family discussions with quick-fix answers and demands that are simply unfair.
 - (3). When obedient children are dealt with that way time after time, they eventually become completely exasperated and respond with anger.
 - (a). And THEIR ANGER IS JUSTIFIED!

(4). This doesn't give children the right to think every time Dad says "no," he's being unfair.

(5). But it's a warning to fathers to deal with their children fairly and with understanding.

B. Now that we've looked at some of the times when anger is justified, in our next lesson, we'll look at a couple of other important teachings about anger.

1. Specifically, we want to see the times when anger is NOT justified.
2. Then we want to find some Scriptural advice for dealing with anger.

CONCLUSION:

I. Although there is a proper place for anger, we should never forget that love, compassion and longsuffering are the factors that keep our anger under control.

A. We've all suffered from the abuses of anger, just as we have from other emotions.

1. But that doesn't diminish the positive role anger can play.
 - a. So, instead of denying it, let's learn to use it as God would use it.

- II. None of us want to be on the receiving end of anger, especially if that anger were being directed by God toward us.
 - A. But don't think that God's wrath can't be poured out on us.
 - 1. God's wrath will be poured out on all who do not obey Him and who refuse to submit themselves to His will.
 - a. He gave the greatest gift anyone could possible give to show us how much He loved us – He gave His Only Begotten Son.
 - b. And if we reject that gift, then we can expect the anger of God to be poured out in our direction.
 - B. Are you taking steps to become a recipient of God's love, grace and mercy by coming to Him through His Son?