

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life: (17)  
Following Jesus Christ Rightly: #12. Dealing with Sinful Anger”**

**Introduction:**

We are Christians, who are greatly blessed by our good God. The goodness that God has bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ places upon us the blessed privilege and the obligatory duty to respond to God both in faith and in faithfulness. And so, in our desire and effort to follow Jesus Christ rightly, we are to turn continually from our former ways--the ways that we lived without Christ--, as we strive to conform ourselves to the life that the Lord has prescribed and set before us. We may read a portion of Holy Scripture in which both of these duties are set before us--turning from sin and living in righteousness. Here is **James 1:16-22**:

<sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup>Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. <sup>18</sup>Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

<sup>19</sup>So then, my beloved brethren, *let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; <sup>20</sup>for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

<sup>21</sup>Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup>But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves... (James 1:12-22)

We who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior have been brought into this state of grace due to the will of God. Through His use of the word of truth, God caused us to be born again. We were born into a new way of life, a life given by God, a life lived before God. It is therefore necessary for us to listen carefully to the Word of God; we are to be teachable. It is also necessary that we obey the Word of God; we are to be responsive. We are to “lay aside” the sins that once characterized us, including outbursts of anger and voicing harsh words, for these do not result in living the life of righteousness that the Lord has prescribed for us.

This work of sanctification, this process of becoming more holy, more like Jesus Christ, is only possible through the grace of God. God the Holy Spirit enables and empowers us to do the things that He commands us. Paul wrote in Romans 8:13, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” This is the nature of the Christian life. This is the course that all of the Lord’s people are to take through this life unto their promised inheritance.

This morning we will first address the nature of sin in general. We will then become specific in addressing one form of sin that we all struggle with to one degree or another, that being sinful anger. All of us from time to time experience anger that seems to well up within us and take control of our thinking, our emotions and our will. I would like us to know how we may be delivered from the power of this sin in our lives.

First, let us acknowledge that there are many different sins from which we are to turn, that is, sins for which we should repent. We see many of these various sins set forth in...

**I. The vice lists of Scripture**

The sins that we strive to eradicate from our lives comes in many forms. There are lists of sins that are set before us in the New Testament, sins from which we are to seek deliverance. These lists of sins are sometimes called “vice lists.” For example, in Mark 7:21 and 22 the Lord Jesus said, “For it is from within,

from the human heart, that evil intentions come: *fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.*"

Paul gave a "vice list" in Romans 1:29-31, "They were filled with *every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*" 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 10 contains another list: "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! *Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers* — none of these will inherit the kingdom of God." Paul gave a rather extensive list in Ephesians 4:17-32. We will read the larger context in which these verses are found:

<sup>17</sup>This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup>having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup>who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

<sup>20</sup>But you have not so learned Christ, <sup>21</sup>if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: <sup>22</sup>that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup>and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup>and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup>Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup>"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, <sup>27</sup>nor give place to the devil. <sup>28</sup>Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. <sup>29</sup>Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* <sup>32</sup>*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

Several weeks ago we read **Colossians 3:1-14**, when we addressed the subject, "Our Identity in Christ"<sup>1</sup>). It contains a vice list:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: *fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* <sup>6</sup>Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup>in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

<sup>8</sup>But now you yourselves are to put off all these: *anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.* <sup>9</sup>*Do not lie to one another,* since you have put off the old man with his deeds, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, <sup>11</sup>where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.<sup>2</sup>

## II. There are three major categories of sin

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<sup>1</sup> See notes for Nov. 12, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> There are other vice lists in Scripture, including these: Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 2 Cor. 12:20-21; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5, 8; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:2-5; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1; 1 Pet. 4:3; Rev. 21:8; 22:15.

If one were to collect all of the sins identified and listed in the New Testament, they could be classified into **three categories**.<sup>3</sup> **First**, there are sins that may be classified under the heading of **moral impurity** (sexual immorality), or sins of the flesh. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 4, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor.” These kinds of sins are described as sins against one’s own body--selfishness lies at the heart of this sin. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:18, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” It is described in the Scriptures as “the lust of the flesh” (1 John 2:16).

A **second** category of sins is in the realm of corrupt temporal values, or more simply, **greediness**. Greed is a sin with respect to our relationship to **physical things**. Greediness is a root sin. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:8-10,

<sup>8</sup>And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For **the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil**, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

If a man is greedy, that is, if he has worldly, temporal values, or if he longs to be rich, he will be characterized by a variety of sins, all of which owe their origin to his greediness. This sin is described in the Scriptures as “the lust of the eyes” (also found in 1 John 2:16)

The **third** category of sins is that of **bitterness**. Bitterness is a sin that surfaces in our relationships with **other people** (or God Himself). This sin is described in the Scriptures as “the pride of life” (again, 1 John 2:6). Bitterness is also described as a root sin. We read in Hebrews 12:15 and 16,

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup>looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest **any root of bitterness** springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; <sup>16</sup>lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

And so, these three categories of sins may be seen as root sins that branch off into all kinds of manifestations of sin in life. Virtually any sin we commit can probably be classified under one or more of these three headings. If you are able to have these three areas in submission to the Lord Jesus, if you have sexual lust under control, if you are content with what things you have and with what things you do not have, and further, if you have a clear conscience in the arena of your interpersonal relationships, you are a long way advanced in the process of sanctification in your life.

### **III. There are four ways in which sin may be committed by us**

The Word of God describes at least four ways in which we commit sins. We may sin against God through our **thoughts**, through our **attitudes** or emotions, through our **actions**, and through our **speech** or words. Sometimes we may sin only in our thought life. But sometimes our sinful thoughts are displayed in our sinful attitudes, even as we commit outward acts of sins. And sadly, many times our sin is shown forth in the words we speak. In other words, when we sin, it may show itself in various ways.

Regarding **sinful thoughts**, our Lord Jesus declared, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19). Here the “heart” would be the sinful nature that shapes and directs the thoughts of man in the way of sin. Probably many sins we commit never show themselves openly because they are restricted to our thinking. But we should not think that we do not sin until they are manifested openly. The Scriptures declare, “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 15:26). And on the Day of Judgment all of our thoughts will be

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<sup>3</sup> We addressed this in a measure about a year ago, on Sunday, December 6, 2016.)

assessed and judged by our Lord. Paul wrote about “the Day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16).

Our *attitudes* will also be assessed in the Day of Judgment. Those who are characterized by hatred, who are contentious, jealous, envious, or who are self-seeking, who possess selfish ambition, shall all be tried and damned by the Judge (Cf. Gal. 5:18-21).

Certainly our *actions* will be scrutinized by King Jesus on the Last Day. Jude wrote,

<sup>14</sup>Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, <sup>15</sup>to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of *all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way...*” (Jude 14f)

Paul wrote of the self-righteous, “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, *who will render to each one according to his deeds*” (Rom 2:5f).

The Lord Jesus Himself declared that *the words* we speak will either damn us on the Day of Judgment or our words will vindicate our claim to be Christian. The Lord Jesus said,

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. <sup>37</sup>For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matt. 12:36f)

When we consider all of these manifestations of sins and the resultant condemnation they bring upon us, we must reaffirm the glorious gospel truth that...

#### **IV. The Lord Jesus satisfied the justice of God with respect to all of the sins of all of His people.**

Consider these blessed words of assurance to all those who have embraced through faith Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior:

**1) 1 John 4:10.** “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent *His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*” (1 John 4:10). Propitiation speaks of satisfying God’s justice, appeasing His wrath upon us for our sin. God’s wrath was heavy upon us. But with the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf, God’s justice was fully satisfied, His wrath appeased.

**2) Hebrews 1:1-4 (NASV).** “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup>in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. <sup>3</sup>And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. *When He had made purification of sins,* He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; <sup>4</sup>having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.” The Lord Jesus secured the purification of sins for all of His people who ever lived, when He died upon His cross.

**3) Colossians 2:13f.** “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, *having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.* This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

**4) Revelation 1:2-6 (ESV).** “John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To Him *who*

*loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood* <sup>6</sup>and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>4</sup>

5) **1 Peter 3:18.** “*For Christ also suffered once for sins*, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...”

6) **Hebrews 9:27.** “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, <sup>28</sup>so *Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many*. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, *apart from sin, for salvation.*”

## V. Dealing with sinful anger

Of the many sins from which the Lord desires to deliver us, the manifestation of sinful anger may be included. This is not a problem to a great degree that every Christian has, but it is a common enough problem that it would do us well to address; besides, someone asked me directly if we would speak to this matter.

Earlier we identified three categories of sins. There are sins of our own flesh, sins with respect to things or events, and there are sins in our relationships with others. Sinful anger may arise in any one of these arenas of life. (1) There may be *things that we personally do or fail to do* that frustrate us, which may result in sinful anger and outbursts. We may become angry with ourselves. (2) There are *events* that happen to us or perhaps fail to happen for us that may irritate us to the point that we manifest sinful anger. (3) And then there are *people* who irritate us through what they do to us, or fail to do for us, that irritate us to such a degree that we respond either publicly or privately in angry ways that violates Scripture. And so, the sources of irritation to which each of us are exposed in one form or another, include people, the environment in which we live, and the attitudes and actions of our own selves. People anger us; things that happen to us anger us; we get angry with our own self. With people, it is their personality traits, idiosyncrasies, and inconsistencies that may anger us. Our experiences anger us when we encounter the deficiencies, inconveniences, undesirable elements, and pressures that the world imposes upon us. We get angry with ourselves because of our defects, weaknesses, illnesses, and personal deficiencies that frustrate and disappoint us.

For some Christians sinful anger is a very real and troublesome matter in their lives. They seem to be angry all the time and at most everything about them. And this sinful anger has consequences for them, for it has damaging effects on their relationships with other people, it may adversely affect their physical health, and it skews the manner in which they view themselves and their relationship with God. For some the problem may be so bad that rather than the Lord Jesus controlling and directing them, these other things or persons appear to control their thinking, their attitudes, and their actions. This anger results in them failing to live in the way they desire, a life that is truly pleasing to God and also that they know would be pleasing to them. In this matter they would resonate with the words of the Apostle Paul:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (Rom. 7:18-19)

How may we understand and address the sources of irritation that result in us committing sins of impatience and anger, being characterized as having a judgmental spirit, and perhaps spoken harsh and unloving words?

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<sup>4</sup> The KJV and the NKJV translates the clause in Revelation 1:5 as, “To Him who loved us and *washed* us from our sins in His own blood.” The Greek word translated “washed” is very similar in spelling to the Greek word translated as “freed” or “released.” The latter Greek word has better attestation in the available manuscripts than the reading that is reflected in the KJV and the NKJV.

**A. First, realize that we commonly respond wrongly to sources of irritation that we experience in our lives.**

When we are angered, we often justify ourselves in our thinking for we believe that we do not deserve the things that are happening to us. Accompanying our self-justification is our quickness to blame other people or the falling out of events themselves to be the source and cause of our problems. Often times our effort to deal with anger is simply to hold it in, “to bite our tongue”, so to speak. When we respond to our irritations in these “natural”, but unbiblical ways, we generally experience conflict. We may have conflict in our own conscience, conflict with others about us, or perhaps even conflict with our God, for ultimately, we know, “He is responsible, or at least He did not prevent this from happening to me.”

How, then, are we to respond to the irritations that we experience in our lives?

**B. We are to acknowledge that the Lord is the One who governs all events that transpire in our lives.**

**1. The Lord is sovereign over all that transpires.**

We read that the Lord “works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:1). When we complain about that which irritates us, we do murmur against God who has ordained what is transpiring in our lives. When the Christian complains or becomes angry due to God’s providential dealings, he is essentially accusing the Lord of mismanagement, even maleficence. When we become angry over what is taking place in our lives, that anger should trigger in us the awareness that we are accusing our God of failure, even injustice. You cannot be grateful for God’s role in your life, you will not be giving thanksgiving to God, when you believe that He has dealt with you in a wrong manner. We are to see His hand as overseeing every aspect of our lives, even those things that may be most unpleasant and what may be unjust. He has purposes in all that He brings us to experience. We are to acknowledge His sovereign control, that He is a good God who gives only good gifts to His people, and then we will find ourselves free to respond accordingly.

Consider King David who was, humanly speaking, deserving of honor and respect. But the time came when his own son, Absalom, fomented an insurrection against him. David had to flee from Jerusalem in order that his son not kill him. As David and his party were departing the city, a man came out who was embittered with David, who began to curse David and throw rocks at him. How did King David respond? We read of this account in 2 Samuel 16:5-14:

<sup>5</sup>Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. <sup>6</sup>And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. <sup>7</sup>Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: “Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! <sup>8</sup>The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!”

<sup>9</sup>Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!”

<sup>10</sup>But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? ***So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’***”

<sup>11</sup>And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? ***Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him.*** <sup>12</sup>It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” <sup>13</sup>And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust.

<sup>14</sup>Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.

Similarly, we are to view every form of irritation as having been filtered through the will of God. He has purposes for these irritations, though we may never understand in this lifetime what those specific purposes are.

And then let us consider the patience of Job. Did he experience what we could call, “sources of irritation”? Most certainly. They were of such a degree that they would probably cause most of us to go mad, if it were not for the grace of God. But how did Job respond? God could say of Job to the devil that he was a man of integrity before him. We read in Job 2:3:

Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.”

We read of Job’s response to having lost his sons and daughters and all of his possessions:

<sup>20</sup>Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.  
<sup>21</sup>And he said:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,  
And naked shall I return there.  
The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;  
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

<sup>22</sup>In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20-22)

When anger arises within our thinking and emotions, humble yourself before the Lord and confess that you know that He is sovereign control of what is transpiring. Pray that He would enable you to recognize what you are to do. Pray that He would give you the grace to do his will in that situation.

## **2. The Lord uses all that takes place in order to sanctify us, in order to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.**

These are not just words, but true to reality:

<sup>28</sup>And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom. 8:28f)

In what ways is the Lord using our irritations to sanctify us? Here was one explanation of His dealings and what He intends to produce in us through various forms of irritation He send our way:<sup>5</sup>

### **The Irritations God sends to us**

From one who is hard to love  
From circumstances of sorrow  
From conditions of confusion  
From irritating inconveniences  
From obvious needs of others  
From unwelcome responsibilities

### **The Quality God would produce in us**

Genuine love based on mature insight  
Continuous joy even in the midst of pain  
Inward peace and steady confidence  
Sympathetic flexibility  
Wise generosity  
Consistent trustworthiness

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<sup>5</sup> This is from the workbook of Bill Gothard, *The Institute of Basic Youth Conflicts* (copyright 1968, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975). This should not be construed as an endorsement of all that Gothard taught.

From people who intrude upon personal rights  
From temptations to wrong desires

Surrender of personal rights  
Self-control

It would be an appropriate response and spiritual exercise to ask the Lord to reveal what Christian character trait(s) He is intending to produce in you through the irritations He brings to you through His acts of providence.

**3. It is through the trials that we experience, that He instructs us in His ways and trains us in holiness.**

We must understand that the trials we encounter are designed by God to train us as His children so that we may become mature and responsible Christians. We read in Hebrews 12:3ff:

<sup>3</sup>For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. <sup>4</sup>You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. <sup>5</sup>And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,  
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;  
<sup>6</sup>For whom the LORD loves He chastens,  
And scourges every son whom He receives.”

<sup>7</sup>If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? <sup>8</sup>But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. <sup>9</sup>Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup>For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. <sup>11</sup>Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, <sup>13</sup>and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. (Heb. 12:3-13)

James instructed his readers to rejoice in their trials for he knew the grace of God would be operative in them through those trials. He wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2ff).

**4. We should recall in our trials that we do not deserve “better treatment” from the hand of God who controls our lives.**

If we received from the Lord what we deserve, it would be eternal hell. We have no claim or right to demand or expect anything from God except for His wrath, apart from the abundance of what He has promised to us through His mercy and grace alone. He owes us nothing. He is under no obligation to us, except for that which He bound Himself in promise through the covenant we enjoy with Him in Jesus Christ.

**5. We are to thank God for the irritations that He sends to us.** “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:18).

**6. We are to see the ones that irritate us as being sent to us by God so that we might serve them in love.** When persons anger us, we should understand what is taking place in our souls. We are angry because we do not think that they are “serving” us as we are entitled to be served by them. They are



withholding from us or denying us of what we “deserve.” In reality, we are insisting that they serve us rather than us assuming our responsibility to serve them.

**C. We are to lower our expectations of others, so that we do not think that they have to live according to a standard that we have set for them.**

Many Christians have established expectations of their fellow believers that are detrimental to developing and maintaining healthy relationships. They set up a standard of belief or behavior that must be met by another in order for full fellowship to be extended to him or her. This is wrong. We are to lower our expectations, in fact, we are only to hold forth what God expects of people rather than those standards that we have set up in our own minds that we demand of them. If we fail to do this, how can we say that we are any different than non-Christians in the world? Our Lord taught this principle in His Sermon on the Mount. He said,

<sup>44</sup>“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup>that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?” (Matt. 5:44-47)

We are “to love”, in other words, “to serve” others, not because they warrant our favor because they have met the standards by which we measure them, but we are to be as our heavenly Father who has loved us, that is, who has served us, not because we have done things to merit his favor, but because He is a loving God even toward His enemies. And if you are His child, you are to become like Him.

**D. We are to surrender what we perceive wrongly to be our rights for which we may expect others to honor.**

The Word of God does speak about righteous anger. Paul wrote, “Be angry and sin not” (Eph. 4:26). But most of the anger that we experience is unrighteous. It is sin. Most of the time when we become angry, it is due to a “right” that we believe is due us, that someone is refusing or fail to grant us.

The character quality that describes someone who has surrendered his “rights” is what the Bible calls “meekness.”

**Meekness is the quality of a Christian who does not see himself as having a right to be served by anyone, but he believes it is his responsibility to serve everyone.**

We are to pursue meekness. Meekness is the ability to yield, or surrender. It is a quality of character that says, “It does not have to be done my way or in my timing.” Meekness is present when a person simply does not have to be given the credit for who he is or for what he has done. The meek Christian does not seek great things for himself, in fact he is willing to give what he has, his riches, power, or reputation, to the cause of Christ. He is content with a lower station of life, for generally it is pride, which is some ways the opposite of meekness, puts people upon a determination to be rich and powerful and popular at any cost to others or themselves. The person who is not meek, feels he must be popular. He must be esteemed by others as someone great in who he is or what he has done. I think that is why Hollywood, politics, and much of professional sports is so grating upon the sensibilities of God’s people. The hype, the bragging, the pride and arrogance, the glory that is placed on man, is contrary to the spirit of meekness that is so attractive and desirable for the one who is godly.

Meekness is the quality of being willing to set one’s own comfort and glory for the cause of Christ. The meek man does not seek nor need the approval of others. He does not build his sense of identity on what he does well or who he knows, or how much he has acquired, whether in terms of money or power. He

is concerned about others' reputation, but he cares little of his own as long as he knows that he is living so as to please and glorify God. In this sense meekness is to be equated with a humble nature.

Apart from the Lord Jesus, who was the meekest person in history? Moses. Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Why is this? He had so much that was and could be his, and yet he gave it all up. The book of Hebrews describes his meekness:

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible (11:24-27).

It was Moses' desire to be godly above all else that moved him to walk away from gaining the whole world. Why? For he viewed his life from the perspective of eternity. He saw that the wealth and power of this world were in a sense illusionary, or at least temporary. The real and lasting things were spiritual in nature. He would choose to be godly rather than wealthy, popular, and powerful.

If Moses was very meek because of his willingness to give up his power and wealth for the sake of God's people, *how infinitely more was our Lord Jesus!* He was willing to give up the glory which He had with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5). Giving up the praise that was given to Him continuously from creation, coming among people who did not treat him with the dignity due a human being yet alone eternal God. He came to serve, rather than be served. He came to die, and to die a terrible and shameful death. But it is Christ's example that we are to hold before us as a pattern for our attitudes and behavior. Paul wrote in another place,

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The opposite of meekness is anger. An angry person is not a meek person, unless that anger is due to the injustice done to another, and especially when it is due to dishonor rendered to God. We read of the Lord Jesus

<sup>13</sup>Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" <sup>17</sup>Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (Joh 2:13-17).

But again, most of our anger is sinful. We become angry because we have a right that we wrongly believed is entitled to us. It should be the responsibility of each of us that when anger wells up within us, we ask the Lord to reveal to us what arena of thought or life have we insisted that we may control, an arena of our lives that we insist is under our own lordship. And then upon identifying that so-called "right", humble yourself, denying yourself, transferring that right to the Lord.

Rights come in many forms. Here are some examples:

- "I have a right to my privacy."
- "I have a right to express my opinion."
- "I have a right to be obeyed."
- "I have a right to be respected."
- "I have a right to be treated with kindness by others."
- "I have a right to be spoken to with courtesy."
- "I have a right to read or watch what I want to."
- "I have a right to choose my friends."
- "I have a right to be accepted for who I am."
- "I have a right to health care."
- "I have a right to how I spend my money."
- "I have a right to have and control my things."
- "I have a right to use my free time as I want."

Unless and until we surrender these rights to God, when we perceive someone or something is denying us of what we think we are entitled, we will become angry. But when we surrender our rights to God, acknowledging that He is free either to grant us these things or withhold them, even through His acts of providence, we will experience peace in our souls. Peace will be enjoyed by those who yield to His sovereign and wise dealings with them. The Christian who has learned this important spiritual lesson will experience peace and joy that he had never known all the while he had insisted on having his way.

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As our Lord Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 7:12)

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Excursus:

### **The Way the World recommends we deal with Anger**

I came across this article last evening as I was completing the above notes. This is how the non-Christian world would advise you to deal with anger. Consider what is said here and how it differs from what God has revealed to us in His Word. To the world, our ways are foolish. To us, the ways of the world are empty and useless. Below there are 9 negative consequences for having anger. The world is quite good at provided a *description* what happens. But it is clear that the world has no true *prescription* to deal with the human condition. The 10<sup>th</sup> point provides the sole instruction of how people are to deal with anger. "Don't hold it in"; or as they put it, "Don't bottle up feelings." In other words, they way that we are to deal with our anger is to vent it before and toward others. Will this prescription improve people's attitudes and relationships?

### **Keep your Cool, According to Scientists**

By Eve Simmons for The Mail on Sunday

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- \* Third of Britons they have friend or family who have trouble controlling anger
- \* Angry men aged 20 to 40 more likely to be dead in 35 years than calm ones
- \* This is due to a number of factors linking stress to physiological damage

Unfortunately, keeping your cool is a problem for many people: almost a third of Britons polled say they have a close friend or family member who has trouble controlling their anger.

Last week The Mail on Sunday revealed that MP Paul Farrelly was being investigated after launching a foul-mouthed outburst at a fellow politician after a heated Brexit debate.

And it's not the first time the MP has been involved in a fracas. He made headlines in 2010 after leaving a newspaper seller bloodied and bruised during a fight in a House of Commons bar.

Unfortunately, keeping your cool is a problem for many people: almost a third of Britons polled say they have a close friend or family member who has trouble controlling their anger, while one in ten admit to having a problem with their temper. Here, we outline ten reasons why it's good to get anger under control...

## 1. ANGRY PEOPLE DIE SOONER

Researchers from Iowa State University found that angry men aged 20 to 40 were one-and-a-half times more likely to be dead 35 years later than those who were calmer.

Scientists believe this is due to a number of factors linking stress to physiological damage. The frequent release of adrenaline during periods of stress damages DNA, which could lead to life-threatening illnesses such as multiple sclerosis.

## 2. GRUMPS DON'T SLEEP AS WELL

Feelings of anger produce a heightened response in the amygdala, the part of the brain associated with survival instincts. Angry emotions prompt the amygdala to signal a heightened state of anxiety to the rest of the brain and the body, increasing blood flow to the limbs and heart, which makes relaxation almost impossible.

Those exposed to anger-inducing stimuli – without discussing how it made them feel – are more likely to experience insomnia than those who engage in an emotional 'debrief', according to neuroscientists at the University of Massachusetts.

'Writing down the cause of your anger frees up the space in your head, dampening the fear response and encouraging relaxation,' says Mike Fisher, director of the British Association of Anger Management.

## 3. ANGER CAUSES HEADACHES

Emotions such as excitement or anger result in the release of stress hormones cortisol, adrenaline and testosterone, which put the body into flight-or-flight mode.

The chemical surge increases blood flow to the brain and triggers the swelling of both blood vessels and nerves surrounding the brain.

The pressure can result in tension and headaches. A study of 422 healthy adults found that chronic headache sufferers scored significantly higher on a 'trait anger scale'.

## 4. IT CAN TRIGGER LUNG DISEASE

Those of a hostile nature experience reduced functioning of the respiratory system, researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found.

Studies looking into the lung function of more than 2,000 men, over an eight-year period, observed that highly hostile individuals performed significantly worse on a simple inhalation task than those who were rated less hostile.

## 5. IT MAKES YOU ANXIOUS AND DEPRESSED

When we feel angry, neurotransmitters and hormones are sent through the bloodstream which, in turn, increase both the heart rate and muscle tension. This is the body's state of alert.

Frequent occurrence of this reaction puts a strain on neurons in the hypothalamus, the brain's 'stress control centre', meaning that it becomes harder for the neurons to switch off. And the 'happy hormone' serotonin is significantly depleted in some aggressive individuals.

When we feel angry, neurotransmitters and hormones are sent through the bloodstream which, in turn, increase both the heart rate and muscle tension. This is the body's state of alert. File photo

## 6. YOU'LL GET SICK MORE OFTEN

Too much cortisol in the body – released by adrenal glands during angry outbursts – can cause an imbalance in blood sugar, repress the thyroid and even decrease bone density, according to researchers at Southampton University.

When released initially, cortisol triggers an anti-inflammatory response by the immune system, but prolonged increase of the hormone makes the body more susceptible to viruses.

#### 7. RISK OF HEART DISEASE INCREASES

As blood pressure rises thanks to a surge in adrenaline, the heart beats faster, increasing the risk of potentially fatal abnormal heart rhythms. Adrenaline also signals for the release of platelets, which can trigger blood clots or block arteries – particularly dangerous if arteries are restricted by a build-up of cholesterol.

Studies have shown that men in particular who score highly on trait anger scales are three times more likely to suffer from general heart disease, according to Harvard University scientists.

#### 8. IT'S HARD TO DIGEST...

Once the 'fight or flight' signal has been issued by the brain, blood supply is directed to areas needed for action such as the limbs. That means blood supply to the digestive system is reduced, with a reduced amount of oxygen provided to keep vital 'good' bacteria in your gut alive.

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A dampened immune system can lead to a weakened gut lining, increasing vulnerability to harmful bacteria entering the area, according to experts at the University of California.

#### 9. AND MAKES YOU WRINKLY

Brazilian scientists have shown that heightened stress reduces the amount of available glucocorticoids – the hormone involved in the synthesis of the skin-plumping compound collagen.

A lack of collagen contributes towards saggy, wrinkled skin. What's more, the weakened immune system caused by stress responses increases inflammatory reactions to pathogens underneath the skin.

Dermatologists at the University of Rochester say enhanced periods of anger disrupt the skin-barrier function, making it easier for allergens to penetrate and resulting in skin conditions such as dermatitis and psoriasis.

#### 10. DON'T BOTTLE UP FEELINGS

Repressing, rather than expressing, anger puts you at an even higher risk of developing health problems. A University of Chicago analysis reported a particularly increased risk of hypertension for angry individuals who tended to keep their anger 'below a level of consciousness'.

So-called 'repressers' experience a pronounced surge in blood pressure when performing a stressful written test, according to studies involving 120 aerospace employees by University of Stanford psychologists.

Experts say that by repressing emotion, excess stress hormones remain in the emotion-processing areas of the brain for longer, meaning that physical reactions become chronic.

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