

Wisdom and Anger

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[0 : 00] Better the poor whose way of life is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse. Desire without knowledge is not good. How much more will hasty feet miss the way?

A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord. Wealth attracts many friends, but even the closest friend of the poor person deserts them.

A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free. Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.

The poor are shunned by all their relatives. How much more do their friends avoid them? Though the poor pursue them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found. The one who gets wisdom loves life. The one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper.

A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish. It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury. How much worse for a slave to rule over princes.

[1 : 09] A person's wisdom yields patience. It is to one's glory to overlook an offense. A king's rage is like the roar of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass.

Thanks be to God. Thank you, Hayley. Just for people who don't know me, because there's bound to be a few, I've been here in St Silas now for 11 years.

Before that, I was a Church Scotland minister for 30 years, almost 30 years. And I'm delighted to be here. I thoroughly enjoy the church here. I think it's great.

And we have so many friends. However, we also have a minister who goes on holiday and leaves you with titles like wisdom and anger. Yeah, I felt very angry when he left me with that.

So just a wee disclaimer, it is impossible to treat this subject properly in under three and a half hours.

[2 : 19] So we'll take a wee vote. Who would like to treat it properly? That's good. We'll see what we can do in 20 minutes. Secondly, although Darren said we'd be preaching from that passage, it's very difficult to preach from a passage in Proverbs.

And we're really talking about wisdom. And it's not just the wisdom of Solomon in Proverbs. It's the wisdom of God in the whole of the Bible. So we'll be looking much wider than the passage that we read just now.

Now I've got a wee outline for you. And you can look at that if you want. It's on the inside of your yellow sheet. So what I discovered as I started to prepare for this is that there are endless books on anger, on anger management, anger therapy.

And that's not where we're going. What we are going to look at is what the Bible has to say about anger and how we can take that and let it affect our lives.

Now every sermon, no matter who's preaching or what they're saying, ought to affect our lives.

That's what a sermon is. A teaching affects your brain. You learn a bit more. I used to be a teacher.

[3 : 41] My pupils didn't always learn a bit more. But we tried. But preaching affects your soul. It should reach your heart. And so I hope that that's what will happen tonight.

Because there's one thing for sure, and I'm the first to put my hand up. We all have anger. So as I talk about it, I want you to think about it yourself.

It may be from a long time ago. It may be from yesterday. But I want you to think about it and to think about what the Bible says and then decide what you should do about it.

So I've decided to look at anger in three ways. First of all, unrighteous anger. And then self-righteous anger. And then you could call it righteous anger, but it's a phrase that I don't like, so I'll call it right anger or holy anger.

So unrighteous anger, first of all. What is anger? Well, anger is an emotional response to a given situation. It's similar to the fight or flight response that your body automatically goes into when it's

faced with danger.

[4 : 55] You either flee or take it on. Punch the big guy in front of you. Whatever. So it's similar to that. The body and mind tense up to respond to this situation.

So someone steals your parking spot. That's a typical source of anger. Just you're about to drive in. They nip in from the other direction. And you want to confront them.

You get out the car. You go over to their car. And you say, didn't you know that was my parking spot and you've just stolen it? It's a response to a situation that has happened.

But unfortunately, and driving gives you a lot of responses, I can remember many a time when somebody has cut in on me. What do you think they're doing?

You know? In fact, there was one wee boy who said to his mummy, Mummy, why is it that all the idiots come out when daddy's driving? What happens when we go into that response of anger?

[6 : 06] Well, a lot of physical things are happening. The body releases adrenaline. There's an adrenaline surge. Your heart rate increases. Your blood pressure rises.

And your hands begin to sweat. Very often, your fist will automatically clench. Your face will turn red. And you'll speak louder. Now, if that's happening, then you know you've got anger.

It's all part of a natural, God-given response to that situation. My daughter has got a dog, a rescue dog.

It's a cross between a collie and an Osatian. So it's big and powerful and highly intelligent. And whenever it sees a situation like the postman coming to the door, its hackles go up, its lovely tail goes in a circle like that, it makes itself as big as possible, and it barks.

It barks its head off. And that's the dog's response to a perceived threat to it, something that it doesn't like. The thing is, we are not dogs.

[7 : 21] And so an automatic response is something which we have to take control of and not let it get out of control. Verse 11 of what we read, I'm quoting from the New Living Translation throughout.

Sensible people control their anger. Sensible people control their anger. So the first thing about anger, for a sensible person, and all Christians are sensible people, haven't they done?

You deal with many of them. The first thing is to control it. So if you think about it, and if already you're imagining that situation where the temperature was rising with your blood pressure, think about how you controlled it, or if you controlled it.

You didn't control it at all. The sensible person will control their anger, and they'll earn respect by overlooking wrongs.

And this is part of the problem with anger. We think that we have been wronged. That was our parking space. So we have been wronged, and therefore we've responded to that.

[8 : 37] But the sensible person who takes that thought under control will overlook what the other person has done. They'll sit and pray for them.

They'll thank God for them. And they'll be glad that the other person has found a parking space. You've got the idea. You have to control your anger.

And that's the first wisdom that we have to learn tonight. When we have that surging anger, we have to take control. Unrighteous anger also looks for someone to blame.

Instead of taking blame upon yourself, you look around and see who you can blame. I'm watching the first test match between England and Australia.

And one of the things about cricket, I used to play cricket, that I know to be true, is that when a batsman is given out, they make their way to the dressing room, and then they throw things about and hit the wall with their bat, and so on, and express their anger at getting out.

[9 : 47] Nowadays, they've got all the videos, video replays, and so you can't complain that it wasn't out. You know, it definitely was out. It doesn't matter, though. They still have that anger that they want to express.

It comes originally from the baby, from the child. The child is wanting to express itself. Mommy, it's an hour past my feeding time, and so they start to scream, and they let you know that that's what they want.

They're using anger to express their desire. As they grow up to be a child, they continue to do the same thing, but now it's changed a bit.

Now it's your friend who's in who's just stolen your toy, and so you go into a screaming fit, and I demand that Mommy does something about it, and you say that that boy is no longer your friend,

and so on.

As you get into a teenager, it continues to develop, and it should be somewhere dealt with along that road, and wise parents will recognize that, and however they want to do it is up to them, but they will try to understand and get the child to understand, get the child to realize that they have to manage to take control, because once you get to the teenage stage, pity help you.

[11 : 24] The teenager is wonderful at expressing their desire, and going out and slamming the door, and so on.

We've been through three teenagers, and then another three as grandchildren, and one of them in particular of those six is very good at expressing his anger.

But it looks for someone to blame. When our grandson Jack goes out and slams the door, there is someone to blame. It's his mother. Why didn't she give me the money to go to that show, or whatever it is?

Why did she refuse me? Why did she say she can't run me to my friends when I wanted her to run me to my friends? And so he gets angry, and expresses it by going out, door slamming, and so on. My daughter, bless her, tried and tried, and eventually she realized he's now at the age where she just ignores him, and then he's got to work it out himself.

[12 : 33] I saw a lovely example of this when we returned to Glasgow, and I was shopping in the center of Glasgow and in the Centino shopping center, and I saw this.

I love Glasgow. I was born and brought up in Glasgow, and then we were exiled to Fife for 20 years, but we came back, and I was walking along the Centino shopping center, and in front of me was this boy who was screaming.

I reckoned he was about 10, and the mother was dragging him along, and eventually she stopped, went face to face with him, and said, shut your face, you're not getting it.

Anger being dealt with. If you read books and therapies of anger, you'll come across somebody saying that it's good for you, and it's good to get it out.

Okay, that may be the case if you want to go down that road. Fair enough, but the Bible does not say that. In fact, it's difficult to argue because it's not good for your health, and it's not good for your health if it's happening often.

[13 : 46] It's not good to have surges of adrenaline. It's certainly not good if it becomes habitual. It's not good for the atmosphere around you, the atmosphere that you create wherever you are, whether it's a cricket dressing room or whatever, and it's certainly not good for the cricket bat.

It's just been smashed against the wall. So it's difficult to say that anger can be good and that it's good to express it.

The biblical attitude to anger is quite simple. Anger is sinful. Or even in one reading, it goes as far as to say that anger is evil.

There are several lists made in the Bible, I'm sure you know that, of all the different things. Anger is in that list along with other things that you would definitely not want to apply to you.

Anger is there as well. Get rid of anger, it says. The Bible constantly wants us to get rid of anger. We'll come to these lists in a minute.

[15 : 00] Second anger then in my wee list. I say this because you could have taken this anyway, you could have had ten different kinds of anger if you'd wanted to.

I'm only having three. The second one is self-righteous anger. Now if unrighteous anger is that sudden explosion to this situation, to whatever has happened, to what somebody said, and you react and you react violently and loudly, then self-righteous anger is the anger that's within, the anger that can simmer and go on and on and on.

When I went to be ministering Mabel, we had a lovely man who was our fabric convener. He did so much for us. He and Evelyn got on like a house on fire because they did all sorts of things together. He had a sister in the village, in the town. It's Mabel's, a small town. He had a sister that he hadn't spoken to for 30 years because of an incident where they disagreed and fell out.

And that anger had kept them apart for 30 years. This is the I am right anger. And it's aimed at people who disagree with us, people who are stubborn in their disagreement because they can't see the absolute wisdom in what you're saying and how right you are.

[16 : 32] And so, instead of expressing it in a loud way, it simmers underneath. This isn't the baby anger or the child anger.

It becomes the teenage anger where their rights are trampled on. And that's the problem. We feel that people have trampled on our rights, what we have the right to do, the right to our own opinion. And to, quite often, amazingly often, taking funerals, I would ask about the person, particularly, if you're a Church Scotland minister, you do what's called parish funerals.

Never met them before, but you've got to find out. And very often, I would end up with the phrase, he knew his own mind and was very willing to express it.

And that's often the case. You know, we have our opinion and we want to express it and when somebody doesn't want us to express it or disagrees or at worst, they laugh.

[17 : 42] Then an anger can simmer underneath and that has to be dealt with and it's a much harder anger to deal with than the explosive one. the teenager begins to think, I have the right to walk in and out of this house, to be part of this family and contribute absolutely nothing.

You need to understand what's making you see and to understand that that is what is happening. I was preaching for a friend and I love this friend dearly.

We've known each other for 30, 40 years maybe and he's younger than me so he's still preaching and he asked me to preach for him and then we met up after I'd preached and he thanked me and he said, yeah, I really appreciate you preaching.

There was just a couple of things that people told me about. So, he then told me two criticisms that had been made of my preaching.

I listened to him. I thought, why are you doing that? So, I said to him, how did you deal with that? And he said, oh, well, I listened to him and I told him that I would tell you.

[19 : 08] I said, well, why? Why did you say that? And he said, well, you know, I thought it would be good for them. I said, well, it's not good for me because I can't even reply.

And that was that. We had a re-talk and then we continued our talk. We always meet for about an hour and a half when we meet and then I started driving back up the road and inside was, how dare he?

How dare he tell me the criticisms to my sermon and then glibly say afterwards, of course, an awful lot of people liked it. I didn't hear that. I heard two people criticized it.

That's what I heard and I'm annoyed. And so, the annoyance goes on. These are my thoughts. This is my confession. The annoyance went on until I got home and I told Evelyn.

I told Evelyn I was annoyed as well. And the thoughts continue. This is why it's dangerous. My thought was, I'll never preach for him again. Ridiculous.

[20 : 11] But these were the thoughts that were coming in because anger was sitting down here in my gut. And once I got time to just stop and to think about it, I did what I do when I'm in this kind of situation.

I took myself out of it. And as soon as I took myself out of it, the whole thing changed. Yeah, that's what he told me.

Yeah, he shouldn't have. But we love this couple and I love him and I love preaching for him. And that's where I want to be. So let's just forget this nonsense and my very, very poor reaction to it. But that's this seething anger, this anger that burns deep within sight. And if you don't deal with it, it can be very, very dangerous.

It can go on for years and years. Another thing that came to mind, unfortunately, preparing this, a whole lot of things came to mind about my anger down throughout the years.

[21 : 21] And another one was when I was on the Board of Education of the Church of Scotland, a meeting in Edinburgh. And we were discussing the way the staff were being paid in the headquarters in Edinburgh.

And they were going to move to a performance element in their pay. And I just thought, Jesus wouldn't do that. So I spoke up and said, I just don't think we should be doing that.

I don't think it's Christian. I don't think it's what Jesus would want. And this headmaster said, I really think ministers have to start living in the real world.

Whoa! Unfortunately, the chairman didn't give me the right to reply to that. Because I was going to tell him, look, I taught for 17 years. And between teaching and the ministry, I know what the real world is.

But I never got the chance. And that stayed with me for years. I'd be gardening and I'd be suddenly thinking, I would like to tell him what the real world is.

[22 : 28] Kept going back and I hadn't dealt with it. And we have to deal with it because it's not good for us. What happens physically with this seething anger is that adrenaline is dripping.

And therefore, you're keeping yourself at a tension level which is simply not good for you. So it affects you. It affects your health. But above all, it affects your spiritual well-being.

Because it's very difficult to pray if when you come quietly before God, the first thing that comes into your mind is this old argument. So we have to deal with it.

You see, Jesus said, Matthew chapter 6, I think we're going to get it on the screen. Here we go.

If any of you wants to be my follower, I'm reading it in a slightly different version, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

[23 : 35] If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. I was trying to hang on to that unfinished conversation at that board meeting.

And I was trying to save my life, my thoughts, my opinion. And one of the most important and vital things that any Christian can learn is that that self, if you want to follow Jesus, it has to die.

There is no place for it. Absolutely no place for it. And if you hang on to it, you're going to get into these situations where you are right and they are wrong, and you'll either lose your temper or you'll burn up inside, and you'll need to deal with that.

This is the wisdom of the Bible. If you want to be able to deal with situations, you've got to be able to take yourself out of it. and you will do if you know that you've prayed this prayer, Lord, I want to die to self so that I can live for you.

What about dealing with anger? Well, what I've said already, and I'll say it again, anger is sin.

Here's some passages from the Bible.

[25 : 00] Ephesians chapter 4, verses 26 and 27. Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't sin by letting anger control you.

Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry. Evelyn and I discovered this right at the very start of our marriage. Don't end the day still being angry.

Whatever the situation was, don't take it into tomorrow. Get it resolved. And then the third part of this verse.

Anger gives a foothold to the devil. Do you want the devil to have a foothold into your life?

If you're going to keep on being angry, that's what will happen. You'll damage relationships. You'll upset people around about you. If you're going to hang on to that slow-burning anger, you'll be damaging your relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

[26 : 19] And these verses, things that are wrong, that include anger, Colossians 3, verse 8. But now is the time. Now is the time. Now is the time.

When the Bible says now is the time, it doesn't mean I'll deal with it tomorrow. Now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.

Do you see the kind of things it's linked with? Now is the time. Now is the time to get rid of it. In James 1, verse 20, human anger does not produce the righteousness God wants.

It doesn't have a future for the Christian. It's not part of the Christian life. And back to Proverbs 14, 29, people with understanding control their anger.

I think that's the main wisdom coming from Proverbs. Control your anger. A hot temper shows great foolishness. I'm marrying a young man soon.

[27 : 27] I'm really looking forward to it. I've known him and his family now for some years. And this is another person I meet up with regularly, his father. And his father told me that Michael, when he was young, was quite an angry child and an angry teenager.

And he told me a lovely story which I'm delighted to share with you. They were going skiing and Michael had fallen out with everyone because he wasn't getting his way. So this continued on the ski lift with other people on it and Michael was holding forth as to why he wasn't getting what he wanted.

And so with this rage burning inside him when he got off the ski lift he took his ski stick and he stood banging the ground. Thankfully there was a man in the ski lift who had overheard all of this.

So the man stood beside him took his own ski stick and started banging the ground. and everybody who had been on there burst into laughter.

But it showed Michael just how silly his anger was. You have to work at control. I mean it's all very well you know these preachers who stand up and say you've got to control your anger.

[28 : 51] it's not easy you have to work at it. You should never let an angry outburst get off free. As soon as you realize that that's what's happened that's what you've done you should deal with it.

Whatever that means whether it's saying sorry to God whether it's saying to the person which it usually is I'm sorry that was a terrible way to act and I really do apologize.

And please don't be one of these people who makes an apology and then says but if you if you hadn't said what you said a friend of mine many years ago said nobody makes you angry.

Nobody makes you angry. A lot of people say so and so made me angry. Nobody can make you angry. You're in control of your mind. You choose to be angry so don't try and get out of it by saying somebody made me angry.

Don't say darn that your family made you angry over the last two weeks. Anger is what you have chosen. So here's some ways to get control of your anger.

[30 : 05] Proverbs 15 verse 1 A gentle answer turns away anger. A gentle answer. But harsh words make tempers flare.

answer. Practice a gentle answer. Practice it and keep on practicing it. And when you fail keep saying to yourself I'm not going to fail the next time.

So that when you're in this situation what comes out of your mouth is a gentle answer. The wisdom of scripture. James 1 19 be quick to listen slow to speak and slow to answer.

And then Ephesians chapter 4 get rid of all bitterness rage anger harsh words and slander as well as all types of evil behavior anger is put in with all that lot.

Instead be kind to each other tender hearted forgiving one another just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Practice that.

[31 : 16] Be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving just as Christ as God has forgiven you through Christ. So let's be very clear that dealing with anger not dealing with anger will be harmful to you.

It will be harmful to your health your attitude your behavior it will damage relationships and it will turn away friends and it will diminish your spiritual life.

You'll find it difficult both to pray and to find peace. So I hope I've convinced you to deal with anger because anger is sin and must be dealt with.

But I do want to talk just for a little bit at the end about something else that's in the Bible and it's right anger or righteous anger.

There are two places where it says categorically that Jesus was angry. The first is in the temple. That wonderful temple.

[32 : 20] The culmination of what happened away in the exodus. Now in the temple in Jerusalem and when Jesus goes there they're defiling it in so many different ways.

And Jesus in his anger forms a whip and lashes them out and throws them out of the temple and says get out my father's house is a house of prayer.

They were defiling it. And the other is when he was told that Lazarus had died and I find this one very very interesting. He's told that Lazarus isn't well and Jesus says this is not going to lead to his death.

And so he delays his return but when he returns they come running to him and say Lazarus is dead. And the Bible says that Jesus' reaction was anger.

Now both of these are a right anger and a good anger and therefore there's something that a Christian should be developing as they mature in their Christian faith.

[33 : 33] The first one, second one about Lazarus, Jesus is angry I think because what ought to have been happening hadn't happened. I think he's angry with a broken world.

I think he's angry with sin. When there's a storm in the boat, Jesus stands up and he rebukes the wind and the waves. So when the natural order is not the way natural order should be, Jesus gets angry.

And I think we can take that on board. That when the natural order is not as it should be, when somebody has got a problem, when somebody is ill, react with that kind of anger that says this isn't how it should be, and pray that way.

Pray expectantly. If it doesn't happen, at least you have prayed in a way that it should happen. And if there are things in the world that are happening around you, if there's abuse, if you know someone who's abused, and I've met numerous people, far too many over my years in ministry, be angry about it, be upset, because if you're not, you're likely simply to say, well, that's what the

world's like.

No, that's not what the world's like. That's what the broken world is like. God's world, the world he created, he said is good, it's good, it's good. And the second one, the other one, is where Jesus condemns the religious people.

[35 : 18] People in the temple, the religious people who brought a woman caught in adultery and wanted to use that woman just to test Jesus. No thought of her humanity at all.

And then this place and our last scripture verse for tonight, Matthew chapter 34. This is where Jesus tells a story and it's where he is angry, even with his own followers.

And I think this is a story like all of Jesus' stories, but this is one which goes down through the ages and applies at all times. People who call Jesus Lord should be doing what Jesus wants.

And so this is what he says. He talks about the king. Then the king will say to those in his right, come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.

Why? Because you're good? Because you're saved? Because you're the most wonderful Christian ever born? No, here's why. Here's why you inherit the kingdom.

[36 : 37] Listen, for I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you invited me into your home.

I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you cared for me. I was in prison and you visited me. then these righteous ones will reply, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you naked and clothe you, thirst and give you a drink?

And Jesus says, for as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my children, you have done it to me. the least of God's children are all over this city.

And the responsibility of Christians and of Christian churches is to be where these people can meet with the God who loves them. There's a second half to this.

Of course there is, it's the ones on the other side. And the interesting thing is that as Jesus tells the story, these people say, Lord, Lord.

[37 : 54] They call him Lord. They're not unbelievers. They're not people out in the world there. They are people who believe. And Jesus says, no, you can't get in.

Why? Because you didn't feed the hungry. You didn't visit the sick. You didn't go to prisons. As Dennis and Ann sitting there who go regularly to a prison.

I've ended up, didn't look for it, but I've ended up being seven prisons thanks to being a Christian. Have you done that?

And they say, what do you mean? We didn't see you hungry. We didn't know you were in prison. We didn't know you were starving. We didn't know you needed a drink or clothes.

And he says, yes, but for as much as you didn't do it to the least of these, you didn't do it to me. Let's put on that proper anger that says that we will do what Jesus asks us to do.

[39 : 07] We're going to have a moment of prayer. prayer. And in this moment, I want you just to think of, we've already had confession, but now we're being very, very specific because of this subject.

So I want you to think about your anger, and I want to encourage you as you do that to bring it to God and to bring it in confession. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wisdom in your word that goes from beginning to end, that tells us about anger, and that tells us what you think of our anger. Forgive us. Forgive me, Lord. Forgive each of us for these angry outbursts. Forgive us when we've argued that we were right and ignored the fact that we were also angry.

Forgive us for the times when things have gone on and on in our minds, a seething discontent and anger because we feel our rights have been trampled on.

As these things come to mind, just ask God for his forgiveness as you tell him that you died to self.

[40 : 27] have. Now, Lord, let us take on that anger at a broken world, at the evil in this world, at the neglect of people who should know better towards the least of your children.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.