

Place: Lurgan Baptist 30:10:2011

## GRAPPLING WITH THE GIANTS

### 10. THE GIANT OF ANGER

Reading: Ephesians 4:25-32

Has this ever happened to you ? **Your respiration deepened and your heart began to beat rapidly. Your arterial pressure rose. Blood shifted from your stomach, intestines, to the heart, central nervous system, and muscles. The processes of the alimentary canal ceased. Sugar was freed from the reserves in your liver. Your spleen contracted, and discharged it's contents of concentrated corpuscles and adrenaline was secreted.** You say, “ *What are you talking about ?* ” *I don't know if that's ever happened to me, or not.* ” Well, if you have ever become angry it did. I just read to you the physiological description of what happens when a person gets angry. Now, there is a difference between aggravation and anger. I think of a little girl who was doing her homework, and she asked her dad to explain to her the difference between aggravation and anger. He said, “ *Oh, that's easy, I'll show you.* ” He walked over to the telephone and dialed a number. A man answered the phone, and the dad said, “ *Hello, is George there ?* ” The man said, “ *There is no one here named George. You've got the wrong number.* ”

The man hung up. The dad dialed the number again, and said, “ *Hello, is George there ?* ” This time the man said,

“ *I told you a minute ago that there was no one here by the name of George,* ” and hung up. The dad dialed it again, and again asked, “ *Hello, is George there ?* ” To this the man exploded, and said, “ *Listen buddy, I told you before, and I'm not going to tell you again, that there is no George here. You better not call here again.* ” He hung up. The dad looked to his little girl, and said, “ *Honey, that's anger. Now, let me show you aggravation.* ” The dad dialed the number again, and said, “ *Hello, this is George. Have there been any calls for me ?* ” Do you realise that a high percentage of all murders are committed by family members that were angry ? Did you know that if you have a problem with anger you are five times more likely to have a heart attack than the average person ? Research in the U.S.A has shown that men who score high for hostility on standard tests are four times more likely to die prematurely than men whose scores were low. Yet this is an emotion that we are all too familiar with.

In fact, anger strikes the best of us and makes the worst of us. Clarence McCartney was right when he said, “ *Anger is one of the most common sins, yet one of the most dangerous and injurious to the peace and well being of man.* ” My .... this world is an angry place. Who can say why the word rage has developed so much in recent years. But you pick up your newspaper any morning and you'll read about road rage, parking rage, pedestrian rage, jogger rage, trucker rage, shopping rage, checkout line rage. I am told now there is such a thing as pew rage. We might say that rage is all the rage but we're talking about a serious matter. For at some time or other in your life whether younger or older or both, you either will have, have had,

or even now are grappling with the giant of anger ? The Bible has much to say about this problem and one of the classic passages is here in ( Eph Ch 4 ) where I want you to notice that Paul speaks here about,

### **(1) AN ANGER THAT IS COMMANDED**

Do you see what he says ? “ *Be ye angry and sin not.* ” ( 5:26 ) With those words Paul destroys one of the great myths of the Christian faith , that we should never be angry. I mean we don’t expect a biblical command to be angry. We’ve seen all the danger anger can cause. We recognize it as a product of sin. So why does Paul tell us to be angry, especially when he us about to write in ( 4:31 ) that we should put away all anger from us. Is there some kind of contradiction ? I don’t think so. The indication is that we are dealing with a different kind of anger. Could there be some positive or sinless form of it, if Paul is commanding us to be angry ? That’s exactly what Paul is talking about when he tells us to be angry but not to sin. You see, this type of anger,

#### **(a) IS DEFINED:**

Webster says, “ *that anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and usually antagonism.* ” You see, anger is not in essence a sin, however it is hard to prevent anger from becoming a sin. Dr. David Seamands has concluded, “ *Anger is a divinely implanted emotion. Closely allied to our instinct for right it is designed to be used for constructive spiritual purposes. The person who cannot feel anger at evil is a person who lacks enthusiasm for*

*good. If you cannot hate wrong, its very questionable whether you really love righteousness.* ” And so anger is a God given emotion. Are we not grateful that God has endowed us with His ability to feel emotions ? Then why do many of us keep trying to give back the gift of anger ? Where did we get the idea that its more like the Lord to never get angry ? My .... eighteen times in the Old Testament alone, the anger of the Lord is recorded. Eighteen times the Lord felt angry over sin, and not one of those times was He being sinful. You know anger is like a fire. When a fire is used properly it can warm your home, it can cook your food, it can cheer your heart. However, if left to itself, even a small fire can become a furious blaze annihilating everything in its path. In just the same way anger can be good or bad, it all depends on the situation. So Paul is saying here, “ *Be ye angry but don’t carry that anger to the point of becoming sin.* ”

Aristotle said, “ *Anybody can become angry, that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, and to the right decree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way, that is not with everybody’s power, and that is not easy.* ” Here’s a good principle to remember. ***If we would be angry and not sin we must be angry at nothing but sin.*** Think of the Lord Jesus. For you see, this positive anger is not only defined, this type of anger,

#### **(b) DISPLAYED:**

In the life of Christ. Is there such a thing as anger without sin ? Well, look at the emotions of the Lord Jesus for He is

our Model in all things anger included. We know that the Scriptures teach that Christ was without sin, yet He was not without anger. There are at least three different occasions we find, in Scripture, where the Lord Jesus became angry. Christ became angry with people,

### **1. Who had Hard Hearts:**

*“ And when he had looked round about on them with anger being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it out and his hand was restored whole as the other.”* ( Mk 3:5 ) Now what angered the Lord Jesus was not what somebody else had done to Him. He was angry because these Pharisees wanted to harm someone else. They didn't care one bit about this man with the withered hand. They just wanted to trap the Saviour. They just wanted to condemn Christ. They wanted to find some reason that they could find fault with Jesus and discredit his ministry. 1.

### **2. Who had Haughty Hearts:**

*“ And they brought young children to him that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God.”* ( Mk 10:13-14 ) The word “ *displeased*,” means “ *to be mobbed with indignation*.” Christ was angry, rightfully angry, because the disciples, in their foolish pride, were trying to keep children away from the Saviour. The Lord

today still gets angry with anybody who tries to keep anyone from Him, whether it be because of race, sex, creed, or color.

### **3. Who had Hypocritical Hearts:**

*“ And Jesus went into the temple and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of them that sold doves .... And he taught saying unto them, is it not written, my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer ? but ye have made it a den of thieves.”* ( Mk 11:15-17 ) You see, what was happening was this. People would bring the best of their flocks only to be tuned down by the priest's inspection,. The priests, of course had a sweet deal with the men over at the money tables who happened to have “ *acceptable*,” stock guaranteed to pass inspection. These religious charlatans had turned the temple into a profit-making racket. They were more interested in gold than they were in God, more interested in silver than they were in souls, more interested in money than they were in men.

So all anger is not sin, indeed from the life of Christ sometimes it is a sin not to get angry. The Psalmist says, “ *Ye that love the Lord hate evil.*” ( Ps 97:10 ) I say to you today that we ought to be angry,

Over baby-killing abortionists who value the life of a dog more than they do the life of an unborn baby.

Over a sex-crazed, profanity-filled movie industry that is polluting the minds of young and old alike.

Over gutless politicians who do what is politically expedient instead of what is morally right.

Over a play, that depicts Jesus Christ as a homosexual having sexual relations with His disciples.

Over some old apostate bishop who attacks the person of Christ. His Deity, His Atoning Work, His Bodily Resurrection and His Coming Again.

Someone once walked up to Dr. R. G. Lee and said, “*How many degrees do you have ?*” Dr. Lee said, “*It all depends on what I am preaching about. If it’s whiskey, it’s 104 in the shade.*” Henry Ward Beecher said, “*A man that does not know how to be angry, does not know how to be good. A man that does not know how to be shaken to his heart’s core with indignation over things evil, is either a fungus or a wicked man.*” (1)

## **(2) AN ANGER THAT IS CONDENMED**

Paul describes this kind of anger in more detail. Look if you will at ( 4:31 ) This the kind of anger that you and I know so well. Henry Drummond, a great preacher of an earlier generation, preached one of the greatest sermons on love ever heard. He published it in a little booklet called, “*The Greatest Thing in the World,*” here’s what he said, “*No form of vice, not worldliness, not creed of gold, nor drunkenness itself does more to un-Christianize society than an evil temper.*” You see, there is a type of anger that is a horrible, hurtful hateful, heinous, hellish sin. Did you notice that Paul talks about,

### **(a) THE DEGREES OF THIS ANGER:**

The first thing Paul mentions is “*bitterness.*” Bitterness is often planted in our heart when we have been done wrong or feel we have been done wrong. Then Paul mentions “*wrath.*” The word means to burn. Something happens to us, and we begin to get hot under the collar. Next he mentions “*anger.*” Wrath is what we feel on the inside, but anger is what we show on the outside. Something happens, we begin to burn, and then our eyes get narrow, our face turns red, and the veins begin to pop out. Then we see the matter of “*clamor.*” The word literally means loud quarreling. That’s when we began to raise our voice and begin yelling. Then we see that anger turns into “*evil speaking.*” We get our word “*blasphemy,*” from this word. We begin talking about the other person, saying harsh and critical things. Finally we see the matter of “*malice.*” It literally means “*wickedness.*” That’s when our anger turns physical.

This is when that husband hits his wife, or pushes his children, or kicks his dog. This is when the attitude turns into an outward act that can devastate a marriage or destroy a life. You see, bitterness leads to wrath, wrath to anger, anger to clamor, clamor to evil speaking, and evil speaking to malice. Do you know what I am talking about ? Have you see this growth of anger in your own life ? (a)

### **(b) THE DANGER OF THIS ANGER:**

For he says “*Neither give place to the devil.*” J.B. Phillips translates it, “*Don’t give the devil a foothold.*” The danger of anger is that the devil will get a foothold in

our life. My .... the devil wants to defile our relationship with God and destroy our fellowship with others. A lady once came to Billy Sunday and said, “ *There's nothing wrong with losing my temper. I blow up and then it is all over.* ” Sunday replied, “ *So does a shotgun, but look at the damage it leaves behind.* ” You see, in those moments of anger, the devil has got a foothold and destroyed families, divided churches, and damaged testimonies. Charles Spurgeon said, “ *I have no more right as a Christian to allow a bad temper dwell in me than I have to allow the Devil himself to dwell in me..* ” Could it be that through your bad temper the devil has got a foothold in your life ? This is the anger that the Bible condemns. Now this doesn't mean that we're breaking chairs over each others heads, or screaming our lungs out at each other, sinful, out of control anger can be much more subtle than this. It can reveal itself in the following ways.

### **1. When our Anger Comes from the Wrong Motive:**

Do you recall what it was said of the elder brother ? “ *And he was angry and would not go in.* ” ( Lk 15:28 ) A welcome home party is in progress for a prodigal son who has just returned. But the older brother's jealous anger had begun to burn bridges between himself and his younger brother. Do you ever get jealous when that other believer gets the kind of commendation, promotion, attention that you feel you deserve ? Does that jealousy, pride, revenge begin to spark your anger ? Sinful anger can reveal itself,

### **2. When Things Don't Go Our Way:**

Do you remember Jonah ? He was reluctant to go to Nineveh. Eventually, he went preached the message and the entire city repented and rejoiced and Jonah fumed. “ *It displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was very angry.* ” ( 4:1 ) He didn't see Nineveh destroyed and he was furious. So he walked away from God, built himself a shelter and set down to sulk. But that's not the end of the story. God provided him with a plant to shade him from the sun, then appointed a worm to destroy the plant. Can you hear his whining ? “ *You made me uncomfortable, and I don't like it when I get hot, and now that I'm hot and didn't get my way about Nineveh I have every reason to be angry.* ” Do you get angry when things don't go your way ? When you get a flat tire, when folk on the motorway don't drive to suit you, when it rains on the day you go on holiday, when someone in the Lord's work disagrees with you ? Sinful anger can reveal itself,

### **3. When we React too Quickly:**

When we fly off the handle without examining the facts we are sinning. James says, “ *Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.* ” ( James 1:19 ) Many of us live on the brink of irritation because we are caught up in the fast pace of this world. And like a half cocked pistol, just a little pressure on the trigger is enough to set us off. The great American statesman Thomas Jefferson had a maxim for handling anger, “ *When angry, count ten before you speak, if very angry, count a hundred.* ” But what does the Lord say ? Well, notice there is (1) (2)

## **(3) AN ANGER THAT IS CONTROLLED**

You say, “ *I can’t control my temper. Yes you can.* ” Let me show you. You and the wife are fighting like cats and dogs. You are both screaming at the top of your voice. You are both acting as if you are going to kill each other. About that time the phone rings and immediately you pick it up and answer, “ *Hello-o-o-o may I help you.* ” You just proved that your anger can be controlled and that your temper can be tamed. Let me give you three practical steps on how to manage your anger.

**(a) CONFRONT IT:**

Meet that anger head on. Realize exactly what is happening the moment your temper rears its ugly head. Before you lose your temper remember what God says about a quick temper. He says, first of all, a quick temper is **Dumb**: “ *He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly,* ” ( Prov 14:17 ) The Bible also say that a quick temper is **Divisive**: “ *A wrathful man stirreth up strife.* ” ( Prov 15:18 ) You show me a person who has a quick temper, who will fly off the handle at the least little thing, and I will show you a person who constantly stays in a fight, a quarrel and a dispute. A quick temper is also **Destructive**: for the Bible says, “ *A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment; for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.* ” ( Prov 19:19 ) If you lose your temper, ultimately you are the one that will be punished. It will cause you to lose your friends. It will cause you to lose your job. It will cause you to lose your wife. It will cause you to lose your children. It will cause you to lose your health. The 18<sup>th</sup> century British physician John Hunter who was a pioneer in the field of surgery and served as

surgeon to King George 111, suffered from angina. He discovered that his attacks were often brought on by anger, Hunter lamented, “ *My life is at the mercy of the man who can make me angry.* ” He went on to say, “ *The first scoundrel that gets me angry will kill me.* ” At a meeting of the board of St. George’s Hospital in London, Hunter got into a heated argument with other board members, walked out and dropped dead in the next room. Do you know what Solomon noted for his wisdom says, “ *The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it his glory to pass over a transgression.* ” ( Prov 19:11 ) Learn to ignore petty disagreements. (a)

**(b) CONFINE IT:**

“ *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,* ” ( 4:26 ) In Paul’s day the setting of the sun marked the closing of the day. Its simply an eloquent way of saying clear all your accounts before the day is over and start each day with clean books. Enforce a limit on feelings of resentment and anger. Husbands and wives should never go to bed angry at one another. That great philosopher Phyllis Diller said, “ ***Never go to bed bad. Stay up and fight.*** ” Well, she was half right. You shouldn’t go to bed, but on the other hand you shouldn’t stay up and fight. You should stay up and get right and then go to bed. I heard about a young couple who when they got married made a vow to one another that they would never go to bed angry. *One time they did not sleep for four months.* My .... think of all the angry speeches you’ve devised as you lay tossing and turning in bed. What if you really said all the those things that passed through your mind ? Would you like them to be

published in a book for your friends and family to read ?  
Is it not time to confront you anger ? To confine your  
anger. But not only to (a) (b)

**(c) *CONFESS IT:***

If you feel yourself getting angry, don't try to hide it,  
don't try to excuse it, confess it. Just simply confess to  
Him, “ *Lord, I am becoming angry. First of all, help me to  
make certain that I ought to be. Secondly, if I ought not be  
help me to control it.* ” Have you ever noticed that a fire  
department never fights fire with fire ? They fight fire  
with water. That's one of the greatest ways to control your  
temper. The Bible says, “ *A soft answer turneth away  
wrath but grievous words stir up anger.* ” ( Prov 15:1 ) Do  
you see how Paul ends the chapter ? ( 4:32 )

I think of Alexander the Great. His biographer described  
him as by nature being fervently passionate and  
impulsive. He was strong in his loves, and in his loyalties;  
but he was often swept away by storms of anger. On one  
occasion, in a moment of anger, he grabbed a spear from  
the hands of a guard, and hurled it at the friend of his  
childhood. This man called Clitus, was his life  
companion, rescuer, and general. No sooner had he did  
this, when his fury turned to remorse. Alexander the Great  
himself pulled out the spear as his friend lay gasping for  
his life. All through the night and for several days  
afterward, Alexander lay writhing in his own remorse. He  
would call his friend's name, and refer to himself as the  
murderer of his friend. *You see, Alexander the Great  
conquered the world, but he could not conquer his anger.*

What about you ? Are you angry with someone or  
something this .... ? Do you really want the blessing of  
God upon your life ? Then its time you confronted it,  
confined it, and confessed it.

**Throw light into the darkened cells  
Where passion reigns within  
Quicken my conscience till it feels  
The loathsomeness of sin**

**Search till Thy fiery glance has cast  
Its holy light through all  
And I by grace am brought at last  
Before thy face to fall**

