

In our last study on the subject of anger, we considered together the cause of anger, the seriousness of anger, and the cure for sinful anger. We considered together that the cause of sinful anger can be summarized in one word: pride. When we have a self-importance that believes that everything and everyone is in place to serve us and accomplish our wills, then we become angry when everything and everyone does not serve us and accomplish our wills. The proud man is the one who thinks that he has the right to have things go his way, and he becomes angry when they do not. We then considered the seriousness of sinful anger, and we saw that it is something that is extremely destructive. It is not something that is to be excused or to be accommodated as if it were insignificant. We saw that it is destructive of reputation, we saw that it is destructive of relationships, we saw that it is destructive ministry, and we saw that it is destructive of growth and of life. Finally in our study together last time, we considered together the cure for sinful anger. We read in Proverbs 19:11 that the understanding of a man defers his anger. The thing that we must understand is that we must give up personal sovereignty and self-will. We must give up the idea that we have the right to certain outcomes and conditions in our lives. While we do have a right not to be sinned against, we have no rights to anything else. When we understand that what is important is that God's will is being achieved, even when ours is not; when we understand that what is important is that God is working together all events for good, even though the events themselves may be bad; when we understand that what is important is that our worst circumstances are better than what we deserve; and when we understand that we have treated God far worse than we are being treated; then we too will defer our anger. It is the understanding of these very things that strikes at the cause of anger, pride.

In this study we want to explore further how to deal with the issue of anger. It is a mark of spiritual maturity to delay anger and to deal with anger righteously. The Bible tells us in Titus 1:7 that an elder, bishop, who is to lead the people of God must not be soon angry. Those who are put in positions of leadership are those who are mature, and one of the marks of maturity is the ability to delay anger and deal with it righteously. Proverbs 16:32 says, ***He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that***

ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. Thus it is a mark of spiritual maturity and spiritual strength for one to deal responsibly with the issue of anger. Therefore, we want to ask ourselves these questions: How can we deal with anger in a mature fashion? What constitutes a mature response to anger?

In order to answer, we must recognize in the first place the purpose and value of anger. Now as we have seen, anger is a God-given emotion. This is important to understand. Anger is a God-given emotion. It is an emotion that God himself possesses, and it is one that he has given us the capacity for as well. Now we must understand that God always has a reason for what he does, and God gave us this emotion of anger for a reason. Thus it is not something that we should be wishing we did not possess. Thank God for the gift of the ability to get angry. This anger that God has given to us (or this capacity for anger that God has given to us) is not to be ignored, nor is it to be eradicated. Instead, it is to be understood. We must realize that anger is like pain. It is intended to have a very important but also a very temporary function in our lives. It is there to reveal the existence of a problem and to motivate us to fix that problem. That is why God gives us the capacity for pain. Thank God for the capacity for pain. It reveals to us that there is a problem and motivates us to fix that problem. Well, in the same way God has given to us anger to indicate to us that there is a problem and to motivate us to solve that problem.

Now anger, like pain, is not meant to be ignored, nor is it meant to last forever. It is to have a temporary and yet an important role to play in our lives. It is meant to be responded to and resolved. We would think someone unbalanced if he ignored his physical pain. We would think him unbalanced if he did nothing to resolve his physical pain but went on voluntarily living in it for years. This is precisely what people do when they suppress their anger and pretend like it does not exist or when they live for years with unresolved anger. Anger, like pain, is not meant to be suppressed; it is not meant to go unresolved. It is not meant to be ignored; it is not meant to last forever. Just as pain is the warning system of the body, telling us that something is physically wrong and needs

to be fixed, so anger is the pain messenger of the soul, telling us that something is morally wrong and needs to be fixed. We have nerves in our bodies that sense pain, and ordinarily these nerves lie silent and dormant; but when something wrong happens, they immediately leap into action and start sending messages that something needs to be done now. In the same way, anger is an emotion that is to lie dormant and silent within us until something morally wrong awakens it and causes it to come to life. Just as pain is not always there, but it can suddenly spring up when poked by a sharp thing; in the same way anger is not to always be there, but it should suddenly spring up when something morally wrong pokes the soul. When anger does come to life, like pain, then we must discover the cause and the remedy for it. So the purpose and value of anger is that it is the warning system of the soul telling us that something is wrong and needs to be fixed. It is not to be there all the time, but it is to leap into action when there is something wrong. Consequently we need to see anger as a valuable warning system that awakens us to moral danger.

That brings us to our second point. We must first of all recognize the purpose and value of anger. **Secondly, in the mature management of anger, we must discover and squarely face the cause of our anger.** Now when we experience pain in our bodies, immediately we try to discover the cause of that pain in order to deal with it. If we discover that the cause of the pain is that our fingers are on the hot stove, we pull our fingers away. If we find that the cause of our pain is a child standing on our toe, we move the child. Whatever the case, we must discover the cause of the pain if we are going to resolve it. In the same way, we must discover the cause of our anger if we are going to deal with what is provoking it.

Now as we have seen, there are two types of anger. There is righteous anger, and there is sinful anger. In our previous studies, we have seen that righteous anger is anger at sin. This is the kind of anger that God has, and this is the object of his anger. God is angered at sin, and we are commanded to be angered at it as well. There also exists sinful anger. Sinful anger is anger at not getting our way or getting what we think we deserve.

Fundamentally it is anger at the violation of our sense of personal sovereignty. Our wills and desires were thwarted by people or circumstances, all of which of course are under the control of God. Consequently, when we become angry at people and circumstances, we are really becoming angry at God. Ultimately sinful anger is anger at God's management of the providential circumstances that occur in our lives. It is anger that his will prevailed over our wills in the way that he managed people and situations that occurred in our lives. Before any progress can be made in overcoming anger, we must determine its cause. If the cause of our anger is someone else's sin, then we must deal with that; and if the cause of our anger is our own sin, then we must deal with that as well. Now it is important for us to understand that anger, like pain, does not occur without provocation. Anger always has a source; it always has a history behind it. We must ask ourselves: Why did I get angry? What was the cause? Is it sinful anger, or is it righteous anger? This is the very first step in dealing maturely with our anger because the correct answer will then give us the answer of how we are to resolve our anger. When we admit that we are angry, when we try to see its causes, when we have a proper perspective on it in order to do what is best to deal with it; then we are taking a mature approach to resolving the anger. We are then responding to it in a constructive fashion.

We have seen that in order to deal maturely with anger we must first recognize the purpose and value of anger and then secondly discover and face the cause of anger. That brings us to our third point. **Thirdly we want to consider together that we must implement biblical procedures for the resolution of anger.** Now there are two sets of procedures to follow corresponding to the two types of anger we may have. If we have righteous anger, then there is one set of procedures to follow; and if we have sinful anger, there is another set of procedures to follow.

Let us first of all consider the procedures to follow if our anger is at sin, that is if it is righteous anger. If it is possible, we want to follow biblical procedures for dealing with the sinful behavior that is the object of our anger to resolve the injustice. If someone is poking us with a needle causing pain, we get the pain to stop by getting the person to

stop poking. Similarly if someone is sinning against us causing anger, then the solution is to get that person to stop sinning against us. This resolves the anger because it addresses the moral problem that is provoking the anger. Now if we are going to resolve or address the sin of others toward us that is provoking righteous anger, then we must try to resolve the problem according to biblical procedures.

The first biblical procedure is to attempt to resolve the problem at the personal level. It says in Luke 17:3-4, ***Take heed to yourselves:*** (In other words, be careful with reference to your pattern of behavior.) ***If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*** When someone is angering us by their conduct towards us, the Bible counsels us to take heed to ourselves, that is we need to be very careful in how we react. The way in which we are to react when someone is provoking us to anger by sinning against us is to bring that sin directly and personally to his attention. The matter of the sin is kept between the one who commits it and the one against whom it is committed. The passage tells us to rebuke the sinner. We are to say to that person, "You are sinning against me. That is wrong; you need to stop it." If the person repents, we are to forgive him. Forgiveness in the face of repentance is the resolution of the anger. Once the person stops sinning against us, if we continue to be angry at that person, then it is a manifestation that we have not forgiven him. It demonstrates that we have not dealt in a biblical and mature fashion with our anger. If someone were poking us with a pin, but he stopped when we told him to, we cannot continue to blame him for our pain. We need to acknowledge that the provocation has stopped, and we need to give up our anger when the offense against us is given up.

Thus we should try to solve the problem first at the personal level; but if the problem cannot be settled at the personal level, then secondly we need to begin to involve authority figures. In other words, we need to escalate the situation to the next level of problem resolution. In Matthew 18:15-17 it says, ***Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear***

thee, thou hast gained thy brother... This is the first step that we spoke of that of resolving the problem at the personal level. *But if he will not hear thee,* (It was not resolved at the personal level.) *then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established...* (And then if that does not resolve the problem, you escalate it to the next level.) *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* In other words, ultimately if you cannot stop this person from sinning against you, then the relationship must be terminated. Ongoing sin must not and cannot be tolerated. Now there are a lot of qualifications that could be added to this, and it is not my intention to go into them here. Nonetheless, the principle stands that if a problem cannot be settled at a personal level, then we are to begin to involve authority figures. The authority figures that exist in our lives for the resolution of righteous anger are people like parents. You children, if your brother or sister sins against you, you must tell him to stop. If he does not stop, then the next thing you do is to involve an authority figure, your parent. You must go tell your parent, "Billy or Bobby or Johnny is sinning against me. This is what he has done. I told him to stop it, but he would not. Mom, Dad, will you deal with it?" Likewise, in the case of a church dispute, we first deal with the individual. If it is not resolved at that level, then we take it to the pastor, the proper authority figure. Similarly, in the case of civil disputes we would involve the civil magistrates, the police. The neighbor keeps throwing his garbage over the fence, first go to him personally. If he refuses to stop, call the civil magistrate and have him come deal with it. In the case of someone continuing to sin against you in the workplace (perhaps he is destroying your reputation, subverting your work, or lying about you), you must first go talk to him directly. If it cannot be resolved, then the solution is to go to your immediate supervisor; and if there is no resolution there, continue to go to the next authority level until the situation is resolved.

After we attempt to solve the problem at the personal level, we need to involve authority figures. If the problem cannot be settled by authority figures, then there is a third step to be taken. Unresolved situations that provoke anger must be committed to

God. This means that we take the problem to the highest authority figure that there is, God himself. We must go to God and say, "God, I've followed all the steps in your Word for resolving this sinful behavior towards me. I can't get it resolved. Authority figures can't get it resolved. God, I'm committing it to you to resolve it." When we cannot stop sin against us, the temptation is to resolve it in an ungodly way. We have seen as we considered together the nature of sinful anger that it not only has a sinful cause, and a sinful expression, but it also a sinful attempt at resolution. It Says in Romans 12:19, ***Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*** Therefore, if the person sinning against us will not voluntarily stop, and if authority figures cannot stop him, then we must not resort to the use of revenge, violence, or some other ungodly behavior as we are tempted to do. Instead, we must walk in the steps of our Lord Jesus of whom it is said in 1 Peter 2:23, ***Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*** Jesus received no satisfaction by personally reproofing the Pharisees. The authority figure Pontius Pilate gave him no satisfaction nor justice. So what then did he do? Did he then strike out at these people to try to get justice for himself? -- He did not. He committed his case to God for God to deal with them. Of course we know that God did deal with those who sinned against our Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise we must give up the right to revenge, and we must trust God himself to deal with the sin. Psalm 37:8-11 is a pivotal passage in committing the problem of sin to God. Observe the relationship between the resolution of anger and the committing of the problem to God. Notice the command -- ***Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*** What ground does he offer to us for the resolution of our anger? ***For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*** Thus when we have anger at sin, we try to resolve it at the personal level; and if that does not work, then we try to resolve it by involving authority figures; but if that does not work, we must take the problem to God and commit it to him. At this point, our anger

should cease. In other words, the anger is not to go on and on and on and on. You see, it is the end of spiritual pain with reference to sin against ourselves to commit the situation to God for his justice to deal with it. Once we have done that, we are commanded to cease from anger, to forsake wrath, and especially not to fret ourselves to do evil because we could not get the problem resolved in the way in which we had hoped. We must, when we have righteous anger that cannot be resolved personally or by involving authority figures, give it to God and then let it go. Just as we should not live in pain all the days of our lives, we should not live in anger all the days of our lives. Sin provokes us to righteous anger, but there is sin around us all the time. Is there not? We could be angry twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, every day of our lives. Instead, as each situation comes up that provokes us to righteous anger, we take the proper steps to deal with it; but if it is not resolved, we then take that situation and give it to God. We let it go. There is a lot of sin against us that provokes us to righteous anger that does not get resolved right away. The way to prevent ourselves from living in perpetual and continuous anger is to give those situations to God.

By way of summary: If someone's sin is making you angry, then do all you can do biblically to stop him from continuing the sin and to bring him to repentance over the sin. If this is unsuccessful, then give that situation to God for his vengeance to deal with it. Rest in him, and release the anger. This is the way then to resolve righteous anger. It is important to have righteous anger, but we must be sure that the anger is temporary so we do not live in perpetual anger.

However, not all anger is righteous anger. There are procedures to follow if our anger is really with God, that is if our anger is sinful anger. Remember that one of the responsibilities we have in dealing maturely with anger is to discover and squarely face the cause of our anger. Now if we are honest with ourselves, we may find ourselves saying, "You know my anger is not anger at someone else's sin. I'm just angry at the way this circumstance worked out. My plans were thwarted, and I didn't get my way. Someone didn't fulfill my expectations. He didn't necessarily sin, but he didn't do what I

wanted or respond the way that I hoped." Then we realize that our anger really is anger at the way in which God in his providence has managed the circumstances in our lives. Obviously this situation requires us to deal with our own sinful attitudes and perspectives that cause us to be angry with God and his providences. There are three steps that I would offer. These are not exhaustive; they are just indicative of what we must do in solving sinful anger. If we are going to resolve sinful anger, then it demands that we reorient our attitudes toward God. Our wrong attitudes and perspectives toward God produce our sinful anger with him. Remember that it is the understanding of a man that defers his anger. By reorienting our understanding of who we are and who God is, we can resolve our anger against God for his management of our lives.

First of all in order to reorient our attitudes toward ourselves and God we need to recognize that God has a right to do with us as he pleases. In other words, when God does something through people or providences that frustrate and anger us, then we need to ask ourselves, "Who am I to question God's decisions for my life?" You see God has a right to do with us as he pleases because first of all he created us. It says in Job 40:1-2, ***Moreover the LORD answered Job,*** (Job had been questioning God because he was angered at God's providences.) ***Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.*** In other words, God was saying to Job, "Who do you think you are to be contending and instructing me as to what and how I ought manage your life, your situations, and the unfolding of the affairs that you experience?" He says later in Job 40:8, ***Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous.*** Well, when Job heard these questions his response was in Job 40:4, ***Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*** In other words, "I'll shut my mouth in speaking against God, in being angry against God." When God brought to Job's awareness who God was, who Job was, and that God had a right to do with Job as he pleased, then Job obtained an attitude of humility and submission before the Lord instead of an attitude of questioning anger toward him. In Isaiah 45:9 it says, ***Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth***

it, What makest thou? The point that God is making here is that we are not in a position to question him or to be angry with him with reference to the decisions that he makes.

We have to recognize that God has a right to do with us as He pleases because, not only did he create us, but he also redeemed us. Now we had no rights as mere created beings, but then we put ourselves in an even deeper hole when we sinned against God. However, God in his grace and mercy brought us up out of that miry clay and set our feet upon a solid rock. He established our goings and set us on a course to heaven. He redeemed us by the blood of his Son. Now he says to us in I Corinthians 6:19-20, ***What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price.*** In other words, our lives and our bodies do not belong to us, and God can do anything he pleases with our bodies and our lives. It is his right because, not only did he create us, but he has also purchased us. It is not right to question an owner about his own possessions. They are his possessions; he has a right to do with them as he pleases. Thus when we become angry with God because of our finances, because of our struggles with sin, because of the people that he brought for us to marry, or whatever the circumstance may be, then we are in fact telling God that he does not have the right of providence. We are saying, "God, you don't have a right to do with me as you please. You don't have a right to manage my life in the way in which you've managed it." Of course this is the heart of a sinful attitude. This is declaring that God really is not the one who owns us by way of creation and redemption and that we really have ownership rights to ourselves. The folly of that is found in the fact that God is the one who upholds our very existence by the word of his power moment by moment. When all God would have to do is to let go of his hand for us to pass out of existence altogether, who are we to tell him that he does not have the right to do with us as he pleases?

This is the first step in resolving sinful anger against God, recognizing that he has a right to do with us as he pleases. However, it is not mere recognition of the sovereignty of God that will help us resolve our anger against him. Secondly we need to recognize

that God's wisdom is infinitely superior to ours. One of the things we do constantly is condemn God's wisdom in the way in which he has managed our lives, the way he has allowed in his providence for things to unfold. However, it says in Proverbs 21:30, ***There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.*** In other words, anyone that contradicts the Lord in the way in which he is managing affairs is someone who has no wisdom, no understanding, and no counsel. God has managed our lives with infinite wisdom, and anything that would speak against that wisdom is not wisdom, has no understanding, and is counsel that is utterly corrupt. To be angry at God's providences is to declare that we know better than God how to manage our situations. The minute we start saying that, we are departing from the path of wisdom, understanding, and counsel. In Isaiah 55:8-9 God says, ***For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*** The principle is that we in our finite, limited understanding will never be able to grasp the wisdom, understanding, and counsel of God in the way he has managed our lives. What we must simply do is trust that he is infinitely wise. The fact that we do not see the wisdom nor understand the reasons does not mean that they do not exist. In fact the Bible tells us that all wisdom belongs to God, and our attitude as we face the inscrutable wisdom of God must be the attitude of Psalm 131:1-3. If the Lord's thoughts are higher than my thoughts, then my attitude must be: ***LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*** One of those things categorized as too high for us is God's ways. He says, "My ways are higher than your ways." Therefore, instead of arguing with the ways of God, we need to simply accept them as a manifestation of the wisdom of God. We must recognize that we do not have the capacity to deal in this realm. Would you ask your three-year-old to reach to the top shelf in the closet to get something down? It's too high for him; he can't do it. Similarly we cannot presume to reach up to heaven and understand all the ways of God and his dealings with us. That's too high for us; we can't do it. We must simply trust God, and we must have the attitude that says, ***Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.*** The weaned child

accepts the fact that he can no longer have the breast that he has so long enjoyed and realizes that it is something that does not belong to him. God has said to us, "My wisdom and my ways are above and beyond you. You cannot and do not have access to them. You must simply trust me and submit yourself to me. This is something that is beyond your reach and out of the realm that you may possess." The counsel is: ***Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.*** In other words, "Simply trust my wisdom. Don't try to attain to it, understand it, and grasp it. Just trust it. Rest in the fact that my infinite wisdom is guiding affairs, not just any old way, but in the best possible way for you in your particular circumstances and situations." Is God worthy of that kind of trust? Is a God who is wise enough to make the creation that you see outside the window and when you look at your own two hands wise enough to manage the affairs of your life? I dare say I would not want them in any lesser hands. He has proven himself worthy of trust with reference to his wisdom just by the way he has made the natural creation.

Not only must we recognize that God has a right to do with me as he pleases, not only must we recognize that God has infinitely superior wisdom, thirdly, if we are to resolve sinful anger towards God, we must recognize that God's purpose is to do us good. Now God is not only sovereign and wise, but God is also good. Now we might look at the situations in our lives and fail to see the goodness in them, but once again God's ways are higher than our ways. It is somewhat like when you are reading a mystery novel, -- not that I encourage that -- but at the end of the book you finally say, "Oh! That's how it all fit together. The butler did it." After you get to the end of the story you see how all the pieces do fit together, but while you were watching them unfold you could not figure it out. Well God has purposes, and those purposes are to do us good; but a lot of times we do not see the good until the end of the story. Sometimes we will not see the good until the end of the story in heaven, and sometimes God gives us a glimpse of it in this life. Regardless, listen to the promise of God with reference to all of these circumstances. God says to his people in Jeremiah 29:11, ***For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*** In other words, when God in his providence deals in your life, he has

certain thoughts. Those thoughts are not to punish you. Those thoughts are not to harm you. Those thoughts are not to make you miserable. Those thoughts are to bring you peace, and not evil, and to give you an expected end. What is the end that we are to expect from God's providential dealings in our lives? The end that we expect is an outcome of good and of peace. For it says in Romans 8:28, ***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*** While this thing may not be good, and while it may be highly irritating, it is going to be worked together for good. The expected end outcome of all of this difficulty and pain is going to be peace (because those are the thoughts God thinks towards us) and good (because that is the conclusion that he has promised to us.) This is the expected end for which we by faith wait, even though we may be going through horrendous difficulties. With this perspective, and it alone, we can follow the counsel of James 1:2-3, ***My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*** It is the molding and the shaping of godly character within us that is that expected end. While the process certainly is not pleasant and may be puzzling, we know that the one who is in control is infinitely wise in the management of it and that his purposes are purposes of peace and goodness to us. It is only as we exercise faith in these promises, statements, and representations of God from in the Scripture that we will ever be able to resolve our anger toward God. As we learn contentment, as we learn humility, as we learn submission, and as we learn trust toward God, we necessarily put away sinful anger toward him. There is no cheap, quick, fast solution to this problem of with anger toward God. It is a process of learning contentment, humility, submission, and trust. As we learn these things, we do not get upset at God's providential dealings in our lives. We have learned in whatsoever state we are in to be content. We have learned that we are to humble and to quiet ourselves before God. We have learned that he has the right to do in our lives whatsoever he wants. We have learned not to rely on our own understanding but to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts. Proverbs 19:11 says that the understanding of a man defers his anger. When we understand that God has a right to do with us as he pleases, when we understand that God's wisdom is infinitely superior to ours, when we understand that God's purpose is to

do us good, then we do not get angry with God. However, if we do not understand those things, if we do not believe those things, or if we do not act on those things, then we are going to be angry at God all of the time because very seldom does God give us what we think would be best for us. Thank God he does not. If we were managing our lives, it would take about thirty seconds to make a total wreck of them.

By way of conclusion, we see that anger is a wonderful warning sign that God has given us to tell us that something is wrong and needs to be fixed. Do you know what anger is? It is that red light on the dash board on your car. Ordinarily it lies dormant, but every once in a while, click, it comes on. Instantly you know that something is wrong and needs to be fixed. Our sinful anger is a warning sign that something is wrong with us and something in us needs to be fixed. This is good to know. Our sinful anger reveals to us our immaturity, our lack of submission, our lack of faith, our lack of trust, and our lack of humility. It tells us where we need to grow. Thus when we become sinfully angry, we must say, "Oh God is turning on a red light here. He is telling me that there is something in my life that needs to be worked on. I need to have a better attitude of submission. I need to have more confidence in God's wisdom. I need to have more trust that his purpose is to do me good." It is a good diagnostic tool of our spiritual maturity. Our righteous anger is equally a warning sign that something is wrong with others. It gives us direction and motivation for ministry in the area of correction and restoration of others. When righteous anger occurs in us, the red light on the dash board is coming on saying, "It is time for ministry. Here is a ministry that you need to engage in."

I have three very brief closing words of counsel. The first is that we must deal with the risings of anger immediately. As soon as steps are taken to resolve it, we will begin to cool down; and if each matter is dealt with as soon as it comes up, it does not build to unmanageable proportions. One of the reasons why we often compound our sins in our anger is because we do not deal with it immediately. People sin against us; we do not deal with it. They sin again; we do not deal with it. Again they sin against us; we do not deal with it. All the while the anger is building because we failed to follow the steps

for resolving it, and suddenly we wind up having a sinful expression of our anger. We may see sinful anger building in us toward God instead of instantly dealing with our lack of trust, submission, humility, or contentment. We do not have we let that anger build until becomes a mountain. We must deal with the risings of anger immediately. Do you know what happens to your car if you fail to take care of that red light immediately? -- The problem gets worse. What was a leak in the radiator turns into a \$3,000 rebuilding of the motor. Likewise if you deal with anger when it first arises, then it is a simple fix; however, if you let it build, eventually you will have to replace an engine or a marriage or a destroyed relationship with a child or a church split.

Secondly be sure that sources of anger from the past have been faced and resolved. Each one of us has a personal life history. Things have happened to us in the past, and some of those incidents have never been resolved. Because they have not been resolved, we carry latent anger in us. That anger has been lying there, festering, for years and years. Then someone comes along and does one little thing, and we just explode. That one little thing was not sufficient to cause that degree of reaction. What is going on? Well it occurred because of the incidents of sin against us or sinful behavior on our part from the past that have never been faced and resolved. As a result, anger continues to exist. It forms a baseline of anger that only requires a small provocation to cause it to erupt like a volcano. It is imperative that we not only deal with our present anger and its sources, both righteous and sinful, but that we also deal with our past sources of anger, righteous and sinful, that have never been resolved. When we resolve them, we can know peace in the present and only have to deal with stuff in the present.

Thirdly we need to seek help and accountability from other people. James 5:16 says, *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Because we are ashamed to tell others about our sins, we often try going it alone to resolve them. God never intended that. I am not saying that we need to broadcast our sins to the whole world; but I am saying that, if we have not successfully dealt with our anger that has been

a problem plaguing us for years, we are not likely to fix it on our own in the future. We need help. I say to couples who have been struggling for five years, "Let me come and talk to you. Let me help with marriage counseling." No, they do not want any help. I say, "Look if you haven't fixed your marriage problems in five years on your own, do you think you're going to fix it on your own in the future?" In the same way, when we have the besetting sin of anger and we have been struggling with it for years without being able to overcome it on our own, we are not likely to ever overcome it on our own. This is the reason God has given us a loving, trusting community of believers, who understand personally what it is to be a sinner, who have compassion on those who are in sin, and who want nothing more than to help, to encourage, and to restore someone who is in sin with a spirit of meekness because they know how easy it is for them to be overtaken with their own sins.

The point is this: anger is not a place to stop; it is a place to start. It is a place to begin finding solutions to the problems of which it makes us aware. I ask you this morning: are you an angry person? Are you angry now? Well, if you are, then there is a problem. Find out what it is and deal with it. Once you do, then your anger will have accomplished its God-given purpose. Again, we do not stop with anger, we start with anger because God gave it to us to accomplish the purpose of resolving sin, either in our individual lives or in the lives of the people around us.

This is how to maturely face and respond to anger. If we will do this, we will see anger as an ally, a wonderful diagnostic tool, a red light on the dashboard to tell us that something needs to be fixed. As we fix those things, we find ourselves able to travel down the road of life in peace, contentment, security, and happiness. If we ignore those red lights and just go on, then it will not be very long before everything comes to a grinding halt; and in particular our relationships will come to a grinding halt. It is a lot easier to maintain relationships, like engines, rather than rebuild them.

Well let us pray together: Our kind and gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for your mercy to us, and, Lord, we confess that we have sinned against you many times with our anger. Father, we have not resolved even righteous anger in the way in which we should. Father, I pray that you might help us to deal with anger in a mature fashion, recognize its value, discover its source, and then deal with it according to its nature. Father, give us wisdom in all of this. We need wisdom to discern between righteous and sinful anger. We need wisdom to know ourselves, and, Father, we need courage to face the past and to deal with many of those things that have never been resolved. Father, I pray that in the effort to deal with those things we might not create more problems, but that we might resolve those problems that are there. Oh, Father, give us wisdom, I pray. Direct us in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake. Thank you for the gift of anger. Father, may we use it and not abuse it. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.