

We come now in our fifth and final study in the biblical doctrine of anger. In our previous studies in the biblical doctrine of anger, we have considered several aspects of this subject. We have looked at what the Bible has to say about righteous anger. We have seen that we are to be angry about the things that anger God. He is angry at sin; we are to be angry at sin as well. Then we looked at sinful anger. We considered together what constituted sinful anger and that ultimately sinful anger is anger at God himself. We then looked at the cause of sinful anger and saw that it was pride. We looked at the seriousness of sinful anger and saw that it is extremely destructive. Then we looked at the cure for sinful anger. In our last study, we looked further at how to manage anger in a mature fashion. We saw that we must recognize the purpose and value of anger. Anger is like pain. It has an important and temporary purpose of indicating to us that something is morally wrong and needs to be fixed. It is the warning system of the soul; it awakens us to a problem for us to remedy. Then we saw that we needed secondly to discover and squarely face the causes of our anger. We must ask ourselves, "Why did I get angry? What was the cause -- was it sinful anger, or was it righteous anger?" Then thirdly we considered together that we must implement the biblical procedures for the resolution of our anger. If we have righteous anger, we must try to resolve the problem through the use of biblical methods. First at the personal level, then incorporating authority figures, and ultimately giving the situation over to God that he might exercise justice with reference to it. However, if it is sinful anger, then we need to repent of the wrong attitudes that caused it and deepen our awareness of God's sovereignty, God's wisdom, and God's goodness toward us.

Clearly we have spent a good amount of time considering how to manage our own anger in our previous messages, but today we want to go in a different direction. Today we want to consider together how to deal with anger in other people. We have all been angry, but we have also all been in the presence of others who are angry. How do we respond and deal with a person who is angry? How do we manage anger in our environment? Those around us are angry, so what should we do and how should we deal

with angry people? In this study we want to consider together the guidelines that the Bible gives us on this subject.

**In the first place then, let us consider together how we are to deal with those who are angry at us.** Throughout our lives we will find ourselves to be the object of someone's anger. It is not a pleasant situation. The first response we often have is to return the anger, retaliating with the same types of attitudes that were shown toward us. This makes the situation worse. Often the result is that a small event is escalated into a major confrontation with a great deal of additional sinning on everyone's part. People are angry at us and speak to us in an angry tone, so we speak back in an angry tone; and they get even angrier, and we get even angrier. Before you know it, we have a major conflict. There has to be a better way in dealing with those who are angry at us. There is. What should we do when we find that someone is angry at us? Well, I think the counsel of James 1:19-20 is very helpful in this regard. It tells us, *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

Thus when we find that someone is angry at us, we should take three steps. The first thing that we should do is to pause. Now most sin comes from immediate, instinctive, reactionary, and unthinking responses to provocation. In other words, when someone shows anger at us, we tend to blast right back without even thinking. It is imperative that we do not respond in this fashion. The only way to prevent it is to make it a principle that we will not respond at all until we have had some time to collect our thoughts in order to react responsibly. In other words, we must be slow to speak. You see the person who is fast to speak is a person that speaks without thinking first. My father used to say, "Engage your mind before putting your mouth in gear." How imperative it is that we do engage our minds before we put our mouths in gear. In order to do so, we must be slow to speak. This does not mean that we are to clam up and never speak; but it does mean that we are to take a few seconds or a few minutes, whatever is necessary, to give us time to collect our thoughts and to respond rationally rather than

instinctively. The instinctive responses are what we must resist with this pause. When someone expresses anger at you, make it a principle that you will be slow to speak in response to that anger. Proverbs 15:18 says, *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth (calms) strife.* Thus it is important that when someone is angry at us the first thing that we do is pause. We do not do anything. Do not react; give yourselves a few moments to think.

Well, what are we to think about? That brings us to our second step. We are not only to pause, but secondly we are to evaluate. We do not pause just to allow time to pass unused. We are not being idle during our pause; we are thinking very rapidly and aggressively at that point in time. The reason we must be slow to speak is to give a few moments to ask ourselves some questions. We must ask ourselves first of all, "Why is this person angry? What is the cause of this anger, and why am I the object of it?" We must evaluate whether the anger is righteous or sinful. We must ask, "Does this person have a legitimate right to be angry at me? Did I sin against him? Did my sin cause his anger; or does he have a sinful anger, a result of him not getting his way when he has no particular right to get his way." It is crucial that we make this evaluation. Without a proper diagnosis, a proper remedy or a proper response is impossible.

This brings us then to our third step. When someone is angry with us, we need to pause, we need to evaluate, and thirdly we need to respond. We will need to give various responses based on the results of our evaluation; however, there is one principle that applies to every situation. Regardless of the type of anger we are facing, our response must always consist of a soft answer. Proverbs 15:1 says, *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.* Thus when people are angry with us, we respond with a soft answer. What is a soft answer? -- Well, it is one that is gentle and quiet. It is one that is non-combative. It is the opposite of a strong and aggressive response. Specifically it means that when you respond you must primarily keep your voice down. Lower the volume. Typically people start to raise their voices when they are mad. Consequently we think we have to raise our voices a little louder in order to trump

them. They respond by getting louder, and before long we have a screaming match on our hands. After reaching the limits of human vocal capability, we have to get out the microphones and amplifiers. Instead of that, if we respond with a quiet and calm voice when others yell at us, we will find them immediately lowering their voices. It is amazing what the lowering of voices does to diffuse a situation. Thus a soft answer first of all involves lowering the volume.

Secondly a soft answer involves selecting the least provocative terms to express ourselves. Consider these two statements: "You know, I don't think you're being wise," and "You know, you're acting like an idiot." Both statements have the same essence, but obviously one phrase communicates it in a far more provocative manner than the other. Thus our pause gives us time to select the language that is least likely to provoke the other person to further fits of anger. The last part of Proverbs 15:1 states, *but grievous words stir up anger*. Thus grievous words are what we want to avoid. What are grievous words? -- They are just fighting words. They are words that are used to strike out at someone. As a general rule, adults have a little more self-control than to immediately start pummeling one another with our fists. Instead we pummel one another with our words. Someone strikes us with a word, so we strike him back with a word, and he strikes us again. This is just a verbal fist-fight. These are what grievous words are. When people hurt us with their angry words, the temptation is to hurt them back with our angry words; however this gives them additional reason to be even more angry. They are not only angry with us for the original thing, but now they are angry with us because we have stung them with our words. The result is that they come on even stronger, and the fight escalates from there. The situation needs to be diffused not further inflamed. The crucial elements in achieving that are a low and soft tone of voice and the use of the least provocative terms of expression. Proverbs 15:28 says, *The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things*. When a wicked person comes into contact with an angry person, he just pours out evil; but if a righteous person comes into contact with an angry person, he studies to answer. He thinks, "How should I answer this person?" A soft answer turns away wrath like water

quenches a fire. You can pour gas on a fire, which will inflame it, or you can pour water on it, which will subdue it. Thus, irrespective of your evaluation of the anger, your response needs to be with a soft answer and with the avoidance of grievous words. People often come on strong in their anger because they think they must in order to make a point; however, when we react with a soft answer, they realize that they do not have to. They start to lower their voices because they realize that we understand them. This enables them to calm down.

Knowing that all of our responses must contain a soft answer without grievous words, now we must consider the specific responses. These responses will follow different courses of action based on the evaluation of the anger. If we are the proper objects of righteous anger then we need to follow the counsel of Matthew 5:25, ***Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him.*** If someone is angry at you because you sinned against him, his anger toward you is righteous, and you need to agree with him. You must say, "You know, you're right; I was wrong. I am sorry; would you please forgive me?" This diffuses the anger. Thus admitting our wrongdoing and asking forgiveness for it is the way to respond to people who are righteously angry with us.

Secondly we must follow a different course of action when we encounter sinful anger. We must point out, as tactfully as possible, that the angry person is wrong to be angry. We must demonstrate why he is wrong in being angry with us, and we must try to bring him to repentance over his anger. Now this has to be done very tactfully because often a person who is sinfully angry is also a person who is proud. You will remember we saw that pride was the cause of sinful anger. Thus when we try to bring a person to repentance over his pride, what does it hurt? -- his pride. This is a very difficult situation, but we must not justify his anger by giving into it. This is what we do when we say that we are sorry when we have done nothing genuinely wrong. If the anger is sinful, we need to point that out as tactfully, kindly, and softly as possible. We need to demonstrate the reason it is wrong to be angry with us. God did this very thing with Jonah. After God

showed mercy to the Ninevites, it says in Jonah 4:1, ***But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.*** At whom was he angry? -- Well obviously he was angry at God. It says in Jonah 4:2, ***And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*** He was angry with God, which is sinful anger, because God showed mercy to Nineveh when the city repented. Jonah wanted to see judgment on the city. Jonah 4:3-4 says, ***Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?*** Now there was a soft answer, a very soft answer. God asked Jonah a question. He didn't say, "Jonah, you're angry. You need to stop it, you're sinning against me." He asked him a question, asking Jonah to judge himself. I think this is a good tactic to follow when someone is angry at us without having a right to be. Just say to him, "Do you think that you are doing the right thing to be angry at me in this situation?" Then he has to judge himself. When we act like a judge and pass judgment on someone, then the instant, instinctive response is for him to defend himself. When we ask him to pass judgment on himself, often he will be harder on himself than we would be. At the least he will have to deal with his own conscience, instead of our having to deal with it. I think that this is a very good tactic to use in dealing with someone who is sinfully angry. Just ask him, "Do you think you're doing the right thing to be angry with me? Why?" When having to justify his anger, he will often see the foolishness of it for himself.

The Lord then used an object lesson with Jonah. Notice how gentle and soft God was with him in Jonah 4:6-11, ***And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It***

*is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?* (Notice that he asked him a question once again.) *And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?* Thus God used an object lesson with Jonah and continued to ask him questions. Apparently Jonah did repent of his anger because who but else could have written the book of Jonah? The book is an indictment of Jonah himself and of his sinful rebellion against God. If people are sinfully angry with us, then we need to follow the example of God. We need to point out their errors, as tactfully as possible, perhaps using illustrations, asking questions, and provoking them to judge themselves in an attempt to turn away their anger. This then is how we deal with those that are angry with us. We pause, we evaluate, and we act according to whether the anger is righteous or sinful with a soft answer.

**The second point that we want to consider together regarding the biblical doctrine of anger is dealing with those who are angry with others.** Now previously we talked about dealing with those who are angry at us, but we have all been in the presence of people who are angry at others. What can we do in those situations? We are often in a position to help them deal with their anger. I think that the best way to help others deal with their anger is simply to take them through the steps that we discussed in our message. First of all, help them to analyze their anger. Ask them, "Why are you angry at this other person? Is it sinful anger or is it righteous anger? Are you mad at sin, or are you mad because you didn't get your way and your expectations were not filled?" Then help them to know how to properly express their anger. Give them counsel about the right expression of it. Someone says, "I'm going to really tell that person off next time I see him." You respond, "You know, you really need to be controlled and rational in your expression of anger. You're not to use violence and evil language if you really want to resolve the situation." Thirdly guide them to properly resolve their anger. If their

anger is righteous, then go to the offender one on one to try to resolve it on the personal level. If that does not work, then involve authority figures. If that does not work, then commit the matter to God. However, if they have sinful anger, then remind them of God's right to rule in their lives, of God's wisdom, and of God's goodness. These then are the steps to take them through: help them to analyze their anger, help them to know how to properly express their anger, and guide them to properly resolve their anger.

Generally people will allow you to do this more easily when you are not the object of their anger and when you have a descent relationship with them in which you can offer them counsel. Often you can get them calmed down, you can get them to think clearly about what is going on, and you can guide them into a proper response to those types of situations. A very clear example of this is found in II Kings. This is a story we looked at previously of Naaman the Assyrian coming to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. Notice, if you will, II Kings 5:9-14, ***So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth (angry), and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.*** You see, his pride was offended because he was not given the proper dignity that the second in command in his nation deserved. Only a little messenger came out to tell him to go take a bath in the river. This is how he interpreted it, so he was very angry because his pride had been injured at the way in which he had been treated. He goes on to say in his rage: ***Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*** Now at whom is he angry? He is mad at Elisha; he is furious with him. Now notice the behavior of those with whom he was not angry. ***And his servants came near...*** He is not mad at his servants, but they are in the presence of an angry person... ***his servants came near and spake unto him, and said, My father,*** Notice the respect they use... ***if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?*** Notice that they are



asking questions. They are not saying, "You Dummy, he told you to go wash in the river. Why didn't you go wash in the river?" They did not come making such statements; they came asking questions. *My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?* The answer is clearly yes. *how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?* So they came asking him questions, and in so doing they were basically asking him to judge his own anger, its basis and its foolishness. *Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.* Here we have a very clear example of dealing with someone who is angry at another. I think once again the example is very good. They showed respect to the angry person; he was not put down. The angry person was asked questions; he was asked to judge his own anger. He was not told, "You know, you're really out to lunch here." In causing him to examine himself, he saw the fallacy in what he was doing, and he turned away from it. This is the same technique that God used with Jonah.

That brings us to our third major point. We have seen how we are to deal with those who are angry at us, and we have seen how we are to deal with those who are angry at others. **Thirdly we want to discuss dealing with those who are angry people as the general habit of their lives.** Previously we have been talking about dealing with individual incidents of anger, either toward ourselves or others. However, we have all run into people who are just flat angry people. They are angry all of the time. They are people who are consistently and regularly angry. One cannot be around them for very long before he sees that they are seething on the inside or they are exploding on the outside. Now there are a lot of reasons why people are like this, and it is not my purpose to go into those. Instead we want to ask ourselves, "How do we deal with people who are chronically angry?" Well, the Bible gives us several guidelines. Romans 12:18 says *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* That is our duty, to live peaceably with all men and not to live with anger in reference to other people. It is very hard to live peaceably with chronically angry people, but the Bible gives us some guidelines to help us. I offer to you four of them.

First of all in dealing with chronically angry people, avoid them if at all possible. Proverbs 22:24-25 says, ***Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.*** The Bible recognizes that there are people that not just get mad but who are mad. There are people who do not just become angry but are angry people. The Bible counsels us to stay away from such people if we possibly can. One of the reasons we are to stay away from these people is to prevent us from becoming just like them. The Bible says in Proverbs 13:20 ***He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*** We become like the people that we are around; and if we are around angry people all the time, it will not be long before we are angry people all the time. Thus, if you can possibly avoid such people, do so. Proverbs 21:19 says, ***It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.*** We could also say that it is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry man. In other words, living with angry people is not a pleasant experience. They will make our lives miserable. Don't marry an angry person. You young people, when considering a potential marriage partner, you need to ask: Is this person a chronically angry person? Does this person have a temper, and does it explode on a regular basis? If the person does have such a temper, separate yourself as far from him or her as you can get. You do not want to marry such a person. You do not want a friendship with such a person. You do not even want to be around such a person.

Thus avoid chronically angry people if at all possible, but what if you cannot get away from them? Perhaps you have married such a person. Perhaps you have such a person as a parent. Perhaps you have such a person as a boss, and you are in a job that you cannot leave. In this situation we have three other guidelines. If we cannot avoid them, then secondly we must avoid provoking them if at all possible. It is usually obvious what things set off angry people. We need to avoid doing those things if at all possible. It says in Proverbs 30:33, ***Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter...*** If you put milk into a butter churn and churn it, what do you get? -- Butter. ***...and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood...*** If somebody grabs your nose and twists it,

what will happen? -- It is going to bleed. This is basic cause and effect. ... *so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife*. In other words, if you do not want strife or conflict, if you want to live peaceably with these people, do not do the things that make them angry.

This means that you do not push their peculiar hot buttons. The term we use for this is to walk around them on egg shells. Proverbs 29:8 says, *Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath*. The picture here is that of a city near an army or hostile neighboring people that if treated with scorn and contempt will come attack and destroy the city. Wise men will know how to deal with those antagonistic neighbors so that they do not bring their wrath against the city but rather restrain it. It is simply the part of wisdom to make a study of angry people, to figure out what makes them angry, and to avoid it. This makes life much more pleasant. This is not to say that their anger is justified, righteous, or anything else. It is just a defensive strategy that we employ, even toward a person that gets sinfully angry, in order to as much as lies in us live peaceably with these people.

Thirdly give into these chronically angry people if no compromise of principle is involved. In Ecclesiastes 10:4 it says, *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences*. If someone is offended at you, and you can just give him his way and give in without sinning or sacrificing some biblical principle, do it. You do not have to win. That is what Jesus was saying in Matthew 5:5, *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*. A meek person is one that does not insist on getting his way. He is one who does not retaliate. He does not demand his share of rights. People wonder if this means we will have to let people walk all over the top of us. Yes, this is exactly what it means. There is a time and place for that, as long as we are not compromising some biblical principles in so doing. I have found many times when I could have stood up for my rights and insisted on my way, after reflecting in it, I realized that it really did not matter if I got my way. I realized that if I insisted on my way, it would just cause a conflict. I have thought, "Why not just give in? It isn't worth the fight." I am secure enough in myself to realize that giving does not mean that I am a wimp or a coward. In fact it is a manifestation of strength, is it not? *He that ruleth his*

*spirit is mightier than he that taketh a city.* (Proverbs 16:32) So when we are able to be bigger, more mature, and more selfless than others, and when we give in instead of demanding our way; then what is really being demonstrated on our parts is not weakness but strength. Christ could have called twelve legions of angels to waste the Romans and the Jews in one fell swoop, but he did not do it. There is a place and a time to let others have their way.

Qualifications could have been given to any one of these points. If you have any particular questions, I would be glad to answer them. We could not possibly cover every area. Nevertheless, the principles are valid. Apply them with wisdom.

We need to avoid chronically angry people if at all possible. We need to avoid provoking those angry people that we cannot avoid, and we need to give in to them if it does not compromise principle. The fourth principle is that we must remember that God is in control of angry people. In Psalm 76:10 it says, ***Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*** You see, when you are living with an angry person, what you need to remember is that God is control of that angry person. While perhaps God is allowing him to express sinful anger towards you, God is going to use that anger for his glory and your good. Any other expressions of anger God is going to restrain. You know, that gives me a great deal of peace when I am in the presence of an angry person who is bigger, stronger, and meaner than I am. I know that, no matter how angry this person gets with me, he will not be able to do anything with that anger without God's permission and approval. If God has given his permission and approval, then I can accept whatever may happen to me by the expression of that anger. While God never justifies sin, he does use sin to accomplish his glory and the good of his people. The classic example if this is the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is it not? This was the greatest sin ever accomplished. Did God use it for his glory and for the good of his people? -- Yes, he did. When people are sinfully angry at you and you bear the brunt of that, remember that God is in control of it. That will give you peace with reference to it.

These are some biblical perspectives on dealing with those who are angry around us. I hope that as you reflect on these and implement them that you will be a better manager of angry people. I also hope that when people use them on you, you will recognize them as being an effort at dealing biblically at what is going on with your own life. Let us pray.

Oh, our Father, we thank you that you are the God who is in control of every person, event, emotion, and circumstance. Lord, we pray that you would give us wisdom in dealing with those who are angry at us. Give us the humility to admit it when their anger is justified. Father, give us the humility to admit it when our anger is not. Lord, I pray that you might help us to help others properly manage their anger; and, Lord, we pray that you would save us from the chronically angry. Deliver us from their hands. Father, I pray that none of the young people here would marry an angry person. Father, for those who are married to them, I pray that they would have wisdom in living peaceably with them as much as possible. Father, may there be no compromise of principles or the responsibility of leadership in so doing. Father, may there be wisdom; may we be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in the matter. Lord, thank you that your wrath toward us has been fully expiated and satisfied in the death of your son so that there is no more anger toward your people -- for once the Lord is angered, who can deliver himself? Lord, thank you that we have been delivered from the wrath to come. Father, may we be delivered from our own wrath and anger that is sinful, and, Father, may we be delivered from sinful people who are angry at us. We ask it in Jesus, name. Amen.