

## Devastation as a Result of Unresolved Anger

<sup>19</sup>And it is perfectly evident what the old nature does. It expresses itself in sexual immorality, impurity and indecency; <sup>20</sup>involvement with the occult and with drugs; in feuding, fighting, becoming jealous and getting angry; in selfish ambition, factionalism, intrigue<sup>21</sup> and envy; in drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you now as I have warned you before: those who do such things will have no share in the Kingdom of God! (Gal. 5:19-21, CJB)

In today's Torah reading, *Parashat Balak*, when the king of Moab saw the huge host of Israelites coming out of Egypt, he tried to hire a prophet named Balaam to curse them. As Balaam was traveling, his donkey suddenly stopped and refused to go forward. Balaam became furious and began beating his donkey with a rod. Since anger is a result of accumulated tension, what accumulated tension caused Balaam's anger? When Balaam first asked permission to go curse Israel, God forbade him. However, when King *Balak* sent a more impressive delegation, Balaam again asked the Lord if he could go. In this case, God gave Balaam the desire of his heart but sent *leanness to his soul*. This produced guilt, and perhaps this guilt was expressed in the beating of his donkey. When anger is turned into wrath, it is a huge spiritual problem because willpower is no longer sufficient. We must now engage in spiritual warfare in order to overcome. The book that warns us not to go to bed angry ("*Be angry, but don't sin - don't let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger; otherwise you give room to Satan*" Eph. 4:26-27) also explains, "<sup>12</sup>*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the worldly forces of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Eph. 6:12).

The Bible is replete with examples that illustrate that the key to anger is tension, and tension is cumulative. Five examples come to mind: *Jacob (Jacob's Anger Toward His Wife Rachel)*, *King Saul (Saul's Anger Against David and His Son Jonathan)*, *Cain (Cain's Anger Against His Brother Abel)*, *Balaam (Balaam's Anger Against His Donkey)*, and *King David (King David's Anger Against the thief when confronted by the Prophet Nathan)*. Here are types of guilt and tension in these Biblical accounts: (1) **Jacob: Guilt from deception and unjust gain** earlier in his life; (2) **King Saul: Tension from bitterness against his wife** transferred to others; (3) **Cain: Tension from a conflict over the standards of God that he rejected**; (4) **Balaam: Tension from willfulness in demanding his own way**; (5) **King David: Tension from the guilt of having committed the same type of sin**.

When anger turns to wrath and bitterness, we are dealing with a problem that is bigger than we are. We can purpose with our minds and wills that we will not get angry, and we can feel remorseful after an outburst of anger; however, these inward struggles only prove that we must appeal to the power of God for the control that is needed to resolve anger. Here are some general steps to do that.

(1) **Accept Personal Responsibility for Your Anger:** Anger will never be conquered as long as we justify it, explain it away, or blame others for it. It is true that fathers are commanded not to provoke their children to wrath; however, children are given extra ability (grace) to forgive their offenders. In the final analysis, anger is more than a problem in the mind, will, and emotions. It is a spiritual problem, and as such, it brings us face to face with God's requirements to control our thoughts, words, and actions since we must give an account to Him for each of them. Accepting personal responsibility for anger also requires that we agree with God that anger is wrong. Anger is not a good way to get our point across, nor is it the right way to establish our authority or to let people know when they offend us or to release emotional pressure. The law of God states that the wrath of man does not produce His righteousness (*Jas. 1:20*) and that we are to put away all wrath, anger, and malice (*Eph. 4*)

(2) **See Your Anger Through Those It Damaged:** *Who are the ones in your family or among your friends whom you have damaged by anger?* At first you may not think you have hurt anyone; however, it would be very important to ask those in your immediate family about the times when you got angry and how they felt about it. As you listen, do not justify what you did or try to explain your intentions. Just listen with your heart to the emotional hurts which they experienced through your raised voice, sharp words, and through your spirit of rejection. If this is the appropriate time, ask each one to forgive you for the hurts you brought to them through your anger.

(3) **Recognize Anger as an “Alarm” From Past Guilt:** When the emotion of anger first occurs, it is not sin; it is a signal to correct a wrong response in the past. The present situation that triggered the anger is similar to the past situation or else is related to it. For example, a father might feel anger when his son does not obey him. However, that emotion may be coming from his own bitterness toward and disobedience to his father when he was younger. By using the anger from the present situation to remind him of his past disobedience and then by going back to his father and asking forgiveness for his wrong actions and attitudes, he is turning anger into a special “alarm.” However, if this father fails to see anger as an alarm of his wrong response in the past, he will either try to “control” his anger, which will still communicate reaction to his son, or he will express his anger in damaging words or actions. This new approach to anger is described in the Biblical instruction: *“Be ye angry, and sin not...”* (Ephesians 4:26). The Bible also gives a time limit to responding properly to the initial feelings of anger: *“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”* No anger should be allowed to continue overnight. If it does, it will turn into wrath and give Satan *ground*, or *jurisdiction*, in an area of your soul. For this reason, we have the triple warning: *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:26-27). The word place actually means an area of control or jurisdiction. When we let anger turn into wrath, Satan is given an area of influence in our minds, wills, and emotions. With this new authority, he implants wrong thoughts, emotions, and decisions such as: *Your parents are evil; they will never change. The way to treat them is to tell them off or to leave home and move in with somebody who will appreciate you.*

(4) **Act Quickly in Correcting Past Offenses:** Anger is the emotional explosion that results from a buildup of past tension. Based on Scripture, we experience tension whenever we do that which we know is wrong. This tension is cumulative. As it builds up, it expresses itself in angry responses when similar situations are present. One common cause of anger is stealing by other people. If someone steals our money, our clothes, our time by keeping us waiting, or our reputation by saying things about us that are not true or that are only partially true, we get angry. Such anger is a special signal for us to ask: *Did I ever steal from anyone in the past? Have I ever borrowed something and never returned it? Have I failed to give my parents the honor and respect due them regardless of what they have done, or not done, for me? Have I given my employers a full day’s work for a full day’s wage? Have I cheated on my income tax? Have I robbed God of time and tithes that rightfully belong to Him?* These and other questions must be quickly acted upon when they bring to our memory past offenses. Think through how you can contact the person you wronged. Determine ahead of time what you are going to say. Be sure you confess your wrong actions and also any wrong attitudes such as selfishness, laziness, irresponsibility, resentment, jealousy, envy, greed, etc. After briefly explaining how you offended them and the wrong attitudes or thoughts that prompted the offense, ask the person if he or she would forgive you. Then wait for their response.

(5) **Acknowledge the Anger of Your Forefathers:** In order to fully resolve our anger, we must realize that some of it may be coming from the anger of our forefathers. It is a proven medical fact that our parents pass on to us their tendencies toward heart attacks, diabetes, and other diseases. It is quite obvious that we inherit their physical features so it should not be unusual to expect that the particular types of character flaws that our parents had will be passed on to us as a greater tendency to fail in the same way. If our parents gave way to anger, we will experience unexplained surges of anger. The Lord visits the iniquity of the parents to the third and fourth generations. *Iniquity* is an expression of self-will. It is doing things our way instead of God’s way. It is vital that we acknowledge to God that the moral failures of our parents so that He can free us from any and all influence that they might have passed on to our lives. It is amazing how parents tend to publicly excuse the wrong actions of their children and how children tend to justify their wrong behavior because of what their parents have done. Both Daniel and Nehemiah acknowledged the iniquity of their forefathers.

*If you have surrendered ground to Satan via anger it is imperative that you recover this surrendered ground and have the Lord restore your soul (see my July 8, 2017, message entitled **Regaining Surrendered Ground**).*