

View

A Publication of the Folsom Point church of Christ, 900 E. Natoma, Folsom, CA

November 11, 2007

No Righteousness from Anger

On the “A” list of verses to memorize in the preschool class is the wise saying from Proverbs 15:1 — “A soft answer turns away wrath...” The rest of that verse gives its opposite: “...but a harsh word stirs up anger.” The writer adds, in the same chapter at verse 18, “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention” (all verse references are from the ESV).

There you have it. You can’t go around losing your temper and be “wise” in the sight of man or God. In his letter, often called “the proverbs of the New Testament,” James draws a fairly direct line from wisdom to the ability to control one’s temper. He says in 1:19-20 that we need to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.” The answer to “outbursts of wrath” is to receive the word of God so that it is implanted in us (v. 21). In chapter 3, James discusses the dangers inherent in speech, then asks the question: “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom” (3:13). Before we think a man is “wise,” we must observe his “meekness” (controlled, quiet strength); but a man who cannot control his temper is summarily dismissed from the ranks of the wise.

Proverbs continues to beat this drum. For example, in 14:29, the writer says, “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.” And then this: “Good sense makes one slow to anger and it is his glory to

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overlook an offense” (19:11). We are warned, “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare”

(22:24-25). This advice is placed in direct contrast to how we treat the words of the wise: “Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise...” (22:17a).

Who is wise? The one who is slow to anger; the one who has enough self-control to hold his tongue, to restrain himself at moments when he is most upset. When anger is called for, it is pondered and measured out to meet the moment; it is never an “outburst of wrath” because that is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20; the ESV translates it “fits of anger”). While there are times that we need to be angry, they are few-and-far-between, and never motivated by personal offense — “it is his glory to overlook an offense” (Pr. 19:11). The flip side of that would be: “It is his shame to react to offense with expressed anger.”

It is instructive to consider the times that Jesus got angry. We can make two observations: (1) it was never motivated by something done to Him personally and (2) it was always aimed at protecting the vulnerable or, as in the case of the cleansing(s) of the temple, the things of God. We would do well to follow that example.

There are few things more damaging than “fits of anger.” While it may produce the results that the angry man desires, it never produces the righteousness that God requires (James 1:20). The man who controls his temper under duress is a man who will almost always be considered wise, all things being equal. But a man who “flies off the handle” will almost always be considered foolish. In fact, Proverbs affirms that such a man not only appears foolish, but he exalts folly (Pr. 14:29). It is a sobering thought to be told by God in His inspired word that our “righteous indignation” is anything but righteous. In fact, our anger proves our foolishness.

This is serious. The man who is easily angered — we sometimes say he has “a chip on his shoulder” — is a man who is being ruled by some ungodly, selfish motive. James calls it “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition” (3:14). He says this “wisdom” is “earthly, unspiritual, demonic” (3:15). True wisdom, says James, is manifested by a peaceable and gentle demeanor, the exact opposite of the hostile attitude of the angry man (cf. James 3:17). The angry man is self-willed and therefore not fit to lead. Several of the qualifications of an elder address this issue: “self-controlled,” “respectable,” “not violent but gentle,” “not quarrelsome” (I Tim. 3:2-3); “not arrogant or quick-tempered...not violent...self-controlled...disciplined” (Titus 1:4ff.).

A wise man seeks the peaceful way in every circumstance — it is always his first avenue of approach to a problem. He is a peacemaker: “a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:18). The angry man alienates people — not only those with whom he is angry, but all who have seen him in action. He is not approachable because he intimidates instead of invites. His children are afraid of him, his wife will not confide in him and strife follows him wherever he goes.

In other words — without putting too fine a point on it — the angry man is a fool.

On the other hand, the man who can control his temper “...is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Pr. 16:32).

dp

The church of Christ

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM

Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged
at your convenience.

For more information,
visit our web site at:

www.folsomchurch.com

Agenda

The Lord's Day, November 11, 2007

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching

Sermon: The Story: Lessons from the Temple

☉ Preaching: David Posey

5:00 PM: Lord's Supper, Singing, Preaching

☉ Sermon: David Posey

"How Would Jesus Raise a Child?"

5:30 PM: Bible Classes, All Ages

Adult Class Offerings

☉ Room 11-12, SeedSowers

☉ Auditorium, Deuteronomy (Jeff Warshaw)

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

10 AM, A Study of the Book of James. At the Building.

7:30 PM, Bible classes for ages 18 mos. and up,

Auditorium: Deuteronomy (David Posey)

Notes

Most sermons are available in MP3 format on our website (www.folsomchurch.com) or on CD (see a deacon).

Carnal Weapons

by Robert F. Turner

In a fit of anger, being highly provoked, Joe lashed out with his fist. The blow had scarcely fallen when Joe regained control of himself, was shocked that he had so reacted, and apologized for his rashness. Considering the public nature of the deed, Joe publicly acknowledged his sin at the first opportunity and asked both man and God for forgiveness. He now endeavors to live a quiet, godly life, "forgetting those things which are behind" (Phil. 3:13).

But Joe had struck with his fist, and that is a "carnal weapon"; so Bill spreads the news. The Bible says, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:4), and Bill can quote it word for word. He "uses" the incident time after time to discredit Joe. He "uses" it to cast reflections upon the church of which Joe is a member. He "uses" it in place of scriptural authority for his own faith and practice. "Just look what Joe did!"

And it never occurs to Bill that the incident has become his carnal weapon. He is blind to the fact that he wields, day after day, deliberately and maliciously, a weapon every bit as carnal as the one Joe used in an unguarded moment. If Joe was in error — and he certainly was — Bill is in error and compounds the error day by day.

Carnal weapons are not limited to guns and clubs. In fact, the "war after the flesh" which provoked Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 10 was one waged by his spiritual enemies — the false teachers who made light of Paul's

bodily presence and questioned his authority. (Vs. 7-18).

It is sectarian and carnal to ridicule, quarantine, or by other like methods seek to overcome those who differ with us religiously. "Party" battles may be fought with prejudice-

producing labels, but one does not "fight the good fight of faith" with such weapons. And this applies as much to conservative brethren as to the more liberal. Will we never learn?

One error cannot justify another. I am not a big man, physically or spiritually, because I call, or even prove another to be small.