

Anger

The Great Destroyer

Newspaper headlines abound with crimes of anger. Even Christians today are often stunned at the extent to which their emotions can drive them, with the pendulum swinging from outbursts of anger in some to outright crimes in others, all forbidden by God... “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath (outbursts of anger-NAS), strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the past, that they which do such things *shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (Gal. 5:20,21).

An “Irish” Temper?

My beautiful, Irish grandmother had a fiery temper, I was told as a child. So “anger” became a positive thing to me because it was associated with my engaging grandmother. To my astonishment, when I became born-again, God’s Word told me anger was a sin. This began a cycle of “temper/conviction/apologize”...” temper/conviction/apologize.” For years, I cried out to God with Paul, “Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). I just couldn’t seem to conquer it once and for all. James 1:26 brought great conviction: “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” Finally, the Holy Spirit impressed upon me that I couldn’t defeat it because it was like an ugly weed that kept on growing back from thriving roots. Then He began to teach me to tunnel beneath the anger and discover the source, the roots.

The Root of Pride

It’s amazing how a couple of verses in the Bible can wipe out a library full of psychology books. I had already tried the psychological approach “to get my way.” With a Master’s Degree in Guidance and Counseling and lots of psychology courses, I had all the answers. Right? Wrong, I learned. So, I continued on in anger until God reproved me and one day revealed the concept of “roots” to me. All of my esteemed learning was trashed as my loving God canceled it out with a few verses: “...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;” (Hebrews 12:15)...”Only by pride cometh contention...” (Proverbs 13:10). Pride? Yes, pride, the Lord whispered to my heart, “You are blowing up in contention because of your prideful thoughts.” He began to teach me to trace

my confrontations to the pride root and repent of the sin before Him. I was learning to “bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (I Cor 10:5).

The True Winner

Every time I halted an argument, at the thought or verbal level, and gave it to Him, He would give me peace in exchange - blissful, bathing peace all wrapped up in the warming presence of God. It was sometimes so intense I didn't even care about the situation any more: “ Oh my, now what was I angry about? Go away, prideful thoughts; I'm enjoying the company of Jesus now.” So this was what the blood of Jesus was all about - cleansing all the sin away in a nice, warm, “peace that passeth understanding,” heart-penetrating, spiritual bath.

It didn't matter how far the anger had gone. He was right there to step in at the point I turned the pride over to Him and give me the peace, grace, and eventually the words to correct my offense, after we fellowshiped a bit in His Sweet Presence. He was not condemning, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1).

The true winner of an argument is the one who refuses to fight.

Never mind about what the other person did; God will “plead my cause” (Isaiah 35:1), if I had originally sought Him before speaking about the whole matter. That could take minutes, or it could take years... or it may take until Judgment Day itself, “For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.” (Mark 4:22). That's His business, not mine.

Fear, Pride, and Anger

He taught me other things, too, such as fear can be behind pride; so the pattern could be: Fear-Pride - Angry Contention-Uncontrollable Rage. It's only when the rage is spent that we ask ourselves, “How did my emotions get so out of control? Why couldn't I stop screaming?” If it goes to that last phase - if we don't catch those thoughts/voices feeding our pride and give it to God at the point of rational recognition, we crash past “the point of no return” and go into a rage we can't stop until we're left limp and horrified at ourselves. Even then our precious Lord has His arms outstretched, seeking to console and restore all the self-inflicted wounds. “For *godly sorrow* worketh repentance... but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” (II Cor. 7:10).

Silent Anger

Perhaps these pride thoughts/roots do not become volatile, but turn inward instead in the form of self-pity; depression; moodiness; sarcastic, bitter, murmuring in the heart; stubborn grudge-holding; the “silent treatment;” or brooding. Maybe we won't even admit these are sins, but justify them instead. Psychology loves to help us do that. Psychology taught me to rationalize my sin, blaming it on a self-esteem/inferiority complex problem evolving from my past. That is, I did so until the Holy Spirit searchlight painfully informed

**Symptoms of Silent
Anger can be:**

self-pity
depression
moodiness
sarcastic
bitter
murmuring in the heart
stubbornness
grudge-holding
the “silent treatment”
brooding
gossip
slander

me my “self-esteem” problem was really pride in disguise. I wouldn’t be having it if I weren’t comparing myself with someone else. Whether the other person came out “on top” in my mental comparison or I did, *pride* made me compare in the first place. Yet, God says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.” (Phil. 2:3). Psychological excuses abound today. We hear a lot about “dysfunctional families” being the “root” of all our problems - blame, blame, blame! “Blaming psychology” began in the garden of Eden when our first “dysfunctional family” passed on the blame one to another, though the real problem was that the subtle serpent tempted Eve with pride, “Ye shall be as gods...” (Genesis 3:5). Yet, God would not give me that warm spiritual bath of peace, grace and forgiveness for excuses - only for acknowledged and repented of sin; nor would He give it for the “Christian” psychology twist - blame someone else and then forgive them!

Or perhaps the steaming pride/anger is sweetly vented through gossip and slander against our opponent, under the guise of a prayer request possibly. Spiritual pride is another deceptive sin, and only the Holy Spirit knows how to penetrate its facade until at last “truth in the inward parts” (Psalm 51:6) prevails.

Is this why I Corinthians 10:13 says, “There is no temptation taken you such as is common to man:” because so many manifestations commonly go back to roots, and especially to the root of pride. It has been a “core” sin from the beginning, for it was the grievous sin that got Lucifer and his followers thrown out of heaven and the crucial sin that Jesus was tested on in the wilderness.

The Solution

The solution to all this sin is the same - whatever form it takes. If no excuses are indulged in, and if the *progression* from the roots and thought life to the act can just be *recognized*, it can be brought into the captivity of Christ. If we keep abiding in Jesus, He’ll help us explain our stand calmly and then leave it to Him to “plead our cause.” No need to slip into prideful, angry confrontation to uphold our position. If we persist daily in the Bible and prayer, we’ll have the strength at the moment of trial to call on our Friend, Who is ever with us, waiting to oust the spiritual voices desiring to sink us in the mire. If we grasp that gracious hand reaching down from Heaven, He knows the way out.

He IS the way out.

- Rita Hageman (Copyright, March 2001)

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