

**Christ and Your Anger**  
Proverbs 15:18 (06/25/17)  
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**Proverbs 15:18, *A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,  
But the slow to anger calms a dispute.***

I'll never forget that Saturday morning in our first church. We had gathered all our teachers for a teacher training session. Gail had a degree in education and was taking us through some principles on effective teaching. The atmosphere was warm and friendly; it was a time of sweet unity in our church. Suddenly one of our older men Lenny got upset about something Gail said. His anger fired up and he marched out of the basement where we were gathered. A chill swept through the group; we were all dumbfounded, wondering where that came from. Lenny was a member of our church. This was one of the first times we had to pursue someone who had stirred up strife in our small church. A little later two other men and I drove out to his house and tried to reason with him and call him to repentance, but Lenny felt completely justified in his anger and assured us he'd never be coming down to that church again! A local church cannot allow hot-tempered people to ruin the fellowship and unity of the body. Based on Matthew 18, we had to remove Lenny from the membership for refusing to repent.

This is exactly what Proverbs 15:18 is talking about: ***A hot-tempered man stirs up strife!*** Anger is one of the most common sins in the world. There are angry people all over the Old Testament, all over the world, and surely right in this room. We sinners are proud and self-centered. When we don't get our way or someone offends us, we get angry. The heart begins to race, breathing increases, facial expression changes, and even blood pressure rises when we say and do things that stir up strife.

You may not throw dishes or punch holes in walls, but you probably struggle at times with fits of irritation at your wife or kids or the guy in front of you. You pound your steering wheel, as if that will move the traffic. You may clam up in anger and refuse to talk to your husband like one couple I know, who drove from Indianapolis to Florida after a spat and hardly said a word the entire twelve hours! What would your wife, or children, or people at work say about your temper? How about on the ball diamond or after your kids knock over that brand new big TV screen you just bought, or your wife lost the \$500 you asked her to keep for you?

This morning Jesus is going to give us His wise counsel in Proverbs on handling your anger. We're going to look rather quickly at about 15 proverbs on anger, and then draw some applications for growing in controlling your anger. Look for yourself in these mirrors of God's Word.

**Proverbs 12:16, *A fool's anger is known at once, But a prudent man conceals dishonor.***

Some people have low-grade anger simmering in their hearts and one little bump causes a big BOOM! They explode. When I was attending college in Greenville, SC, we lived in a trailer (mobile home). One day I was outside and noticed this black smoke pouring out of the little heat vent. I quickly ran inside and threw open the door to the furnace to see what was wrong. Big mistake. BOOM! Air hit the hot burner and instantly exploded, singeing my eyebrows, eyelashes, and some of my hair. That's what this fool in Proverbs 12:16 does. He has anger simmering in his heart and when somebody or something crosses him, he blows up. But a prudent, wise, thoughtful person, while he *feels* the dishonor when hearing that offensive comment, *conceals* his response. Christ will empower you to refrain and restrain your reaction to an offense.

**Proverbs 14:29, *He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.***

You will notice as we go through these Proverbs that the wise man has anger. God created us with anger. Anger is an emotion that motivates us to get stuff done. Your garage is a mess and you finally get angry enough about it to get out there and clean it up! Martin Luther said he never did anything well until he got good and angry about it. Anger, he said, sharpens his focus. Jesus got angry at the hard-hearted

Pharisees and was fired up enough to throw the cheaters and rip-offs out of the temple, turning over their tables and sending their shekels in every direction!

So there is a godly anger. If you don't get angry about false teaching, mass murder of unborn children, the perversion of God's design for marriage and family and gender, and so much more that is a direct assault on God and His word, you probably don't know the living God. At the same time, we feel sorry for the multitudes being led astray and assured that all this anti-God thinking is their rights. Our anger must be restrained and constrained by the Spirit of God and the love of Christ. Jesus was angry but what did He do? He never lashed out in uncontrolled anger. We must never return evil for evil. We need Christ's Spirit to fill and control us. To be like Christ is to control your anger. To be controlled by your anger is to be a fool!

**Proverbs 15:1, A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.**

Charles Bridges wrote under this verse, "What a mine of practical wisdom is this Book of God." Here is a verse everyone must memorize and every parent must practice. Jay Adams illustrates this with ping pong. If you want to drive your opponent away, you slam the ball hard. That's a harsh word. If you want to draw him close, you just nudge it over the net. That's a gentle answer. It's hard for an angry person to react in wrath to a gentle and kind answer. But throw out just one stinging word to a hot-head and you've got a full scale conflict on your hands.

**Proverbs 15:18, A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.**

This guy flies off the handle. He's full of self-importance. He thinks he deserves better treatment than you just gave him. He has learned to get his own way by the force of his anger. A circumstance, a person, maybe his wife, or child, or pesky neighbor crosses him and they experience his hot-tempered. The Hebrew for hot-tempered is *chamah*, meaning to be hot, furious, fly into a rage. What does he do? He stirs up strife. He isn't fun to be around. He uses his anger to punish his wife or blame his kids. "It's all your fault! If you hadn't done so-and-so, I wouldn't be angry!" He rationalizes to others, "If you knew what I had to put up with, you'd be angry too!" Everyone treats him with kid gloves and "walks on eggs" around him fearful of triggering his explosive anger.

Evansville policeman and member of our church Jacob Taylor told me, "I hate making domestic violence runs. They are unpredictable, fueled by anger, some kind of substance, and pride. The worst part of it is children. Children learn that anger is okay, normal, and an appropriate way to react when you don't get your way."

This is when you need someone who is slow to anger. A slow-to-anger person calms a dispute and is patient, like Abigail in the Old Testament who lived with a hot-head Nabal. She's gracious, peaceful, bringing calm and a loving spirit into the strife. This spirit is needed in every home where there is more than one child and their little tempers can flare up quickly. They fight and yell and clobber each other over a shovel or truck or who gets to fill the hole first. Life is full of slow-to-anger training opportunities.

**Proverbs 17:14, The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.**

Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr did not like each other. Instead of abandoning the quarrel, they kept it up for several years. Hamilton defamed Burr's character when Burr was running for the governorship of New York. He called him a "profligate, a voluptuary in the extreme." If you keep up the quarrel, it's like broadening the break in a dam, and sooner or later the whole flood of water will rush out and destroy everything. On July 11, 1804, Burr and Hamilton sought to defend their honor and met in New Jersey by the Hudson River to settle the matter with a duel. Hamilton fired above Burr, but Burr's shot hit home, causing fatal damage to Hamilton's internal organs.

When you have a controversy with someone, ask yourself if it is a hill to die on? Is it an issue you need to press? Why do you feel you have to win this argument? What point are you trying to prove? If possible, abandon controversy and save the relationship. You may win the war, but lose the relationship! Before the quarrel even starts, ask Christ to calm your storm. How many ridiculous things do we argue over –

was it brown or black? Was it at 10 or 11? What's the best way to go? If you are at the beginning of strife with your wife, abandon it immediately for two reasons. God says to and she's probably right anyway!

**Proverbs 18:19, *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a citadel.***

Offenses and contentions are first cousins to anger. Contentions are arguments. If you have offended a brother with your arguments, unless he loves Christ and sees himself crucified with Christ and alive to God and is a peacemaker, you'll offend him and have a hard time winning him back. Angry people don't see themselves as wrong. They may even use the Bible to defend their anger. That brother may leave, slamming the door and vowing he'll never be back.

**Proverbs 19:11, *A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.***

The word for glory means a crown or shining. Proverbs says a man's gray head is a glory, a shining! A discreet man doesn't wear his feelings on his sleeves. In fact, he'll ignore the attack on his character. This is how Lincoln handled the high-powered lawyer Edwin Stanton, who called Lincoln a giraffe, stupid, and vowed never to associate with the man. However that changed when President Lincoln invited him to his cabinet as Secretary of War. Lincoln trusted Mr. Stanton and Stanton became a most loyal supporter of his previous foe. It was Lincoln's glory, or shining, to overlook a transgression.

**Proverbs 19:19, *A man of great anger will bear the penalty, For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.***

This hothead is a home-grown terrorist. He's a man of *great* anger. He holds everyone hostage by his anger. Get out of his way! He flies into a rage and lashes out at anyone in his way. He well may end in jail because he's driven by intense, proud, and demanding anger! If you bail him out, you'll probably have to do it again. Better to let him sit there for a while. Of course, he believes he had every reason to get mad and blames others. "She had it coming!" The penalty he bears may be physical. One doctor said, "The next scoundrel that gets me angry will kill me." Sure enough, he was at a medical lecture, disagreed with the speaker, stood up and bitterly attacked him, and then dropped dead on the spot. (*None of These Diseases*, p. 69)

This guy in Proverbs 19:19 needs the power of the gospel and Christ, who can turn stormy hearts to calm and bring wild men like that Gerasene to his right mind. There's hope, but he needs God to open his eyes to his own selfish heart. We all do.

**Proverbs 20:3, *Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.***

**Proverbs 21:9,19, *It is better to live in a corner of a roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman. It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and vexing woman.***

Lest we think only the men are subject to fits of anger and nasty tempers, God makes sure He puts in a word for the ladies. Matthew Henry wrote, "A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and help." John Wesley found this out as his wife was a jealous, contentious woman. A friend dropped by their house one day only to find Mrs. Wesley dragging her poor husband across the floor by his hair! Mr. Wesley wasn't innocent as a husband either. Some wives have lived with nasty husbands for so long, they've become nasty and critical themselves. If your husband or children would say, "Mom seems mad all the time. She yells and scolds so much, I don't think she's very happy," you need time with Jesus for a heart renewal.

**Proverbs 22:24-25, *Do not associate with a man given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself.***

Young ladies, let's hit on this again. Don't date an angry man! You may pride yourself in thinking you know how to calm him down and intend on being his "savior." I guarantee it won't last long into your marriage. He'll refuse your calming and you'll grow tired of being his savior.

Love is not easily provoked. You may have an angry father or mother. You need the grace of God to fill you with the love of Christ. I worked for an older farmer when I was a kid. His adult son lived there too

and he was an angry man. One day I witnessed his rage as he grabbed a calf and slammed it so hard against the barn wall that it died. I always wondered how his two young sons did with their anger as they grew up.

**Proverbs 26:21, *Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.***

**Proverbs 29:8, *Scorners set a city aflame, But wise men turn away anger.***

**Proverbs 29:11, *A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.***

**Proverbs 29:22, *An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.*** Strife is mentioned 18 times in Proverbs. An angry man wants to be in control and if you don't please him there will be trouble. Words will sting, lamps and dishes and laptops will fly, he'll be punching walls. Sometimes he may get violent to others around him, hurting, bruising, breaking, and worse. That's when it's time to get outside help, starting with the elders of your church and the protection of the law.

An angry man abounds in transgressions. He'll use his anger to punish and manipulate and then will blame his wife or kids for his anger. He can't get along with his boss so he ends up going from job to job. No one understands him. He isn't getting his way so he'll go out and get drunk, hook up with someone in a hotel "I'll show her!" He'll rob a convenient store and if he has a gun he becomes really dangerous. One day we were driving through Columbus on the way to Pennsylvania. Apparently I cut in front of a guy. I didn't know it until he came up beside us and motioned for me to pull over. That puts the fear in you. I looked straight ahead and was happy to lose that angry man.

**WHAT DOES YOUR ANGER SAY ABOUT YOU?** What does it say about your heart? Anger is like the red light on the dash declaring you are overheating. Something is wrong. You need help. Here are some things anger exposes about our hearts.

**Your anger exposes your false worship and heart loves.** Call them idols of your heart. You get angry when you aren't getting what you want or are getting what you don't want. Either way, you want your own way more than you want God's way. And that's heart idolatry. "All I want is to come home to a peaceful house. Is that asking too much?" "All I want is a little respect. All I want is for people to listen to me." It may be a good thing, but it's controlling your heart. When you don't get the respect or the honor or obedience you think you deserve, or your kids aren't behaving the way you want them to, and your wife doesn't have the house all cleaned up when you get home and you get angry about it, you've got a heart problem. The wrong "god" is on your throne. James 4:1-2 says your desires are waging war in your heart and your anger is read by God as heart murder! What do you want so much you're willing to sin to try to get it? Those things are idols.

**Your anger exposes a lack of faith in God's sovereignty and control of your life.** In fact, your anger says you want to be in control of other people and even of God. God has brought this person or event into your life and you aren't pleased. They aren't fulfilling *your* sovereign will, and you're irritated and angry. "Why did you let this happen, God?"

**Your anger exposes a proud, self-centered heart.** Instead of esteeming others above yourself and thinking of the things of others (Philippians 2:3), you esteem yourself above others and think of your own things first. Sinful anger is intensely selfish! Proverbs 13:10 assures us, "Where there is strife, there is pride." (NIV)

**Your anger exposes your need for the gospel.** Whether or not you're a believer, you need the gospel. Only Christ, His Word, and His Spirit in your heart can bring you to your senses about your anger and motivate you to repent, seek forgiveness, and learn to show mercy to those who offend you instead of reacting in anger and bitterness. We really need Ephesians 4:31-32 here.

**Ephesians 4:31-32, *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.***

Verse 31 are the poisons of an angry heart: bitterness (deep seated anger over time), wrath (explosive anger or rage), anger (slow, simmering anger), clamor (yelling in anger), slander (attacking people in anger), malice (hating people and wishing them harm in your anger).

The sweetness of the gospel is in verse 32: kindness (wanting the best for others), tender-hearted (showing mercy and gentleness toward others, even those who cross you the wrong way), and forgiving just as God in Christ forgave you.

There's no better anger management course in the world, especially when you are a new creation in Christ and have the power of the Spirit in your heart to obey these directions. Your transformation from a hot-head to a patient, loving man may be just what someone needs to see to turn to Christ.

Some of you are wondering if I'm applying all this to my sinful irritations on the highway, in parking lots, at the check-out, or in the subdivision while walking our dog Rico. I've wrestled with that "Why does this always happen to me?" pout in my heart. People have all morning to back out of their driveway but no, they wait until I'm right there with Rico, then they pull out. Many more such impositions on my life happen regularly. If you came with me, you'd know. So how am I handling all this? I've developed a four-point plan. If you struggle with minor or major irritations, this may help.

#1 God is sovereign over every detail of my life, so if I get irritated I am really getting irritated at God's good providence which brought these people or situations into my life.

#2 God is using these trials to help me grow, love Him more, and be more patient. Thank you, God, for this opportunity to grow and become more like Christ.

#3 I know that at the moment I get irritated, I am not worshiping God above all but actually loving myself above all and that's an idol of my heart. I felt I had the right to have a "no cars in my way" kind of life and my rights belong to God.

#4 I am learning to rejoice in all of this because I know God is loving when I'm sitting at a light and it turns green and the person up front doesn't go and I'm tempted to stick my head out the window and yell, "It's green, people! Go!" But now I'm learning to see these occasions as God demonstrating His love toward me. And it's actually become fun looking for people to pull out in front of me. "Who is God going to use today to help me grow? Aha, it's you in that Ford Focus. Thanks for being part of God's plan for me!"

Have you seen yourself in the mirror of God's Word? We all struggle with anger. We all need Christ, His forgiveness, and His power to please Him rather than pleasing ourselves.