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## SESSION 5 | Self-Control and Anger

### I. INTRODUCTION

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,” (Titus 2:11–12).

Self-control is governing your mind, will, and emotions in obedience to God’s word by the power of the Spirit.

- Titus 2:11-12: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...
- The cultivation of self-control is the fruit and effect of the gospel and not a cause of the gospel.
- God has ordained the cultivation of self-control to be one of the primary means for overcoming a wide variety of sins that seek mastery over us, a chief of which is anger.

### II. WHAT IS ANGER?

- Anger cannot be separated from its effects, but its source needs to be distinguished from its effects.
- What is the source or core of anger? At its core, anger begins to brew in our hearts when we elevate our desires, expectations, or preferences to an unlawful or inordinate degree. And when these inordinate desires, expectations, or preferences are left unmet, anger is the response of our hearts leading to a wide variety of effects across a spectrum depending on the situation at hand and our temperament. On one end of the spectrum are explosive outburst types of responses and on the other are more subtle responses such as internalized brooding, resentments, and isolationism.

- Biblical support – James 4:1-3: (1) What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? (2) You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
- "When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an 'idol,' something you are actually worshiping. When such a thing is threatened, your anger is absolute. Your anger is actually the way the idol keeps you in its service, in its chains. Therefore if you find that, despite all the efforts to forgive, your anger and bitterness cannot subside, you may need to look deeper and ask, 'What am I defending? What is so important that I cannot live without?' It may be that, until some inordinate desire is identified and confronted, you will not be able to master your anger." -Tim Keller

### **III. SELF-CONTROL AS A GOD-GIVEN MEANS FOR OVERCOMING ANGER**

#### **A. Recap – Definition of Self-Control**

- Governing definition of self-control: Self-control is governing your mind, will, and emotions in obedience to God's word by the power of the Spirit.
- Jerry Bridges: "[Self-control] is a governance or prudent control of one's desires, cravings, impulses, emotions, and passions. It is saying no when we should say no. It is moderation in legitimate desires and activities and absolute restraint in areas that are clearly sinful."

#### **B. Self-control applied to anger in the Bible means to be slow to anger**

##### **Verses about God being slow to anger:**

- Psalm 86:15: But you, O Lord, are merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- Psalm 103:8: The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- Nahum 1:3: The Lord is slow to anger and great in power.

**Verses calling us to be slow to anger:**

- Fools marked by their quickness of temper – Proverbs 12:16: The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.
- Proverbs 14:29: Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.
- Proverbs 16:32: Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
- Proverbs 19:11: Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.
- James 1:19-20: Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

**Practices to help you master your spirit, control it, and to become slow to anger:**

1. Put a stop to your anger early before it goes too far. A spark is easier to quench than a flame.
2. Take control of your tongue, hands, and countenance, even if you cannot at the moment quiet or command your passion. You cannot say that it is not in your power to restrain your tongue or hands if you wish.
3. Do not meditate upon past injuries or things that have provoked you when you are alone. Do not allow your thoughts to feed on these things. If you do, you will be like the devil to yourself, and tempt yourself to rage when there is no one else to do it. *You will make your solitude as provocative as if you were in the midst of those who provoke you.* You will stir up anger in your heart by your own imagination.
4. Keep your minds in lively thoughts of the meekness and patience of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2)
5. If you have allowed your passion to break out and to offend or wrong others, by word or deed, freely and speedily confess it to them, and ask them for forgiveness.

6. As far as circumstances allow, go immediately to God in prayer for pardon, and grace against this sin.
7. Look at others in their anger and consider how unlovely they make themselves
8. And finally, from the book of James in the NT: *We are to be quick to hear and slow to speak* and thereby become slow to anger. **James 1:19-20**: Know this, my beloved brothers: let ever person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The example of Christ set before us:

- 1 Peter 2:20-25: (20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. (21) **For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.** (22) **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.** (23) **When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.** (24) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (25) For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Richard Baxter on overcoming a common objection in regards to anger:

- Objection: But the provocation was so great that it would have angered anyone in the same circumstances.
- Answer: This is a weak argument, that you should think that some provocation can be great enough to overrule a man's reason and allow him to break the laws of God. The provocation which you call great would have been small or non-existent to a man who had a prepared mind. **You should rather say, God's majesty and dreadfulness are so great that I should not even consider offending him for any provocation. Has not God given us greater cause to obey than man can give us to sin?**