

Anger

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[0 : 0 0] Well good evening, it's great to be here tonight. We continue our series in the Book of Proverbs and this has been given a very apt title. The title is Becoming Wise because that's what God desires from his people, that we grow in our faith, that we grow in holiness, that we grow in righteousness, that we clothe ourselves with Christ and a product of this is an ever-increasing measure and application of wisdom to our lives. To the situations we all face daily where we have to make a decision and in the past seven weeks we've had some great stuff, some stellar stuff from Alistair, Corey, Neil, Derek and Tom and I've been listening to that online in my own prep just to get into the Book of Proverbs. So I don't really want to reiterate too much of what they've said or tread some old ground but I really do want to say one thing that they have all said in a different form.

Wisdom is something that we need to seek and pray for especially in our modern progressive world. The Bible might not have an explicit command about an issue that we are faced with each and every day but by learning from God's Word, knowing Jesus, loving him and loving the things that he loves, we are equipped with the tools to discern true wisdom. So no matter what you're faced that is your paradigm as how we view the world, whether it be in the workplace, at home, in a relationship, how we can duct our family lives, we need to learn to love what the Lord loves and hate what the Lord hates. Therefore we do not have the luxury of saying the Bible doesn't really comment on that so it's a bit of a gray area because the Bible teaches us about God and about who Jesus is. We can look to Jesus and see what he liked and disliked, what he loved and what he hated and that helps us live a wise and righteous life as we go through this world. Or to put it into the language of Proverbs, Proverbs 9 verse 10 says, the fear of the Lord is a beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is in sight. Wisdom is knowing what pleases God and living a life for that sole purpose. And we should be so thankful for the book of Proverbs because it doesn't really, as I would say in the Highlands, it doesn't really mince its words, it short sayings, we can just grab ahold of them and we can understand them without too much digging. And as the point, the writer of Proverbs wants it to be easy, accessible. I think Corey said in his introduction to this series, this was from an old wise man to the young guy coming up, how to teach him, how to make him wise for the jobs and the world that he's going to face. And there's a lot of challenges within the book of Proverbs to becoming wise, but I've been asked to speak on one of the oldest enemies of wisdom and that is our anger.

And this week, the words of John Calvin have been rattling around my head that if a preacher hasn't first preached a sermon to himself, John Calvin says, it's better to slip on a step and break your neck before you preach that sermon. So I'm really glad that we don't preach from up there anymore because that's a lot of steps because anger is an emotion that we're all so familiar with, aren't we?

We get angry sometimes daily and this is why the writer of Proverbs picks this emotion because it can blind us to wisdom. So I have three short points hopefully for us this evening, I'm going to break the Proverbs up and just discuss the type of anger that the writer is talking about and I've decided to call it the good, the bad, and the ugly. So the first point this morning is this evening is the good and yes there is a good type of anger. The Bible sometimes calls this a righteous anger. Now before we all quickly try and say oh how much of our anger is righteous, I'll just say right at the outset that 99% of the anger that we feel is not righteous, it's not good, and it's not healthy. But the writer of Proverbs never tells us to destroy anger. The Bible is quite clear that we are to destroy sin. To stamp on it, the psalmist says, get rid of it. The book of

Proverbs never talks about anger that in that way. We are not meant to be like you know Spock or the Vulcans in Star Trek who have eradicated all the emotion.

[5 : 10] But what the writer says in Proverbs 14, 29, whoever is slow to anger has great understanding. But he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. Or 1632, whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who takes the city. The writers tell us that we need to be slow to anger. Not to get rid of anger but to be slow. Paul highlights this for us in Ephesians 4 which Stephen read for us. He says be angry but do not sin. The slowness of anger that the Bible teaches us is to reflect upon it. To push it through some filters is this a justified anger that I am feeling? We are to bring it to Jesus.

Is this something that would anger him? We are to pray about it and bring it before God's word. Proverbs 19, 11 says this is good sense. Makes one slow to anger and it is his glory to overlook an offense. It is just good sense to push anger through these filters to make sure it's not coming from a sinful place. We see righteous anger in Matthew 21 with Jesus. Jesus goes to the temple and he looks around he sees things being sold. People having to pay to get in to worship God. It's like tonight the front row they all paid a thousand pounds and poor.

The guy's in the sound booth 20 quid. You know there's something wrong with that. Jesus gets angry. He turns on over the tables. Makes a whip and chases people out.

But there was no sin in his action. Jesus was trying to protect the poor, the weak who just wanted to worship God without being taxed to death. He wanted the temple to be purely for worship to his God and our Father. David Paulson in his book *Good and Angry* writes God who is good and does good expresses good anger for a good cause. Jesus gets good and angry in the service of mercy and peace. This is the perfect display of righteous anger, good anger, being angry at what angers God. This form of anger is actually good because it moves us from inaction to action. We want to do something about it. So as Christians we should get angry at injustice. We should get angry at things like the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer. We should get angry at so much that it goes on in our world. But unfortunately for us as I said 99% of our anger that we live with daily does not come from a good place. It cannot be called righteous or healthy. In fact it's bad. And that's my second point this evening. So what is bad anger? Bad anger in Proverbs I would say is the type of anger that blinds us to biblical wisdom to becoming wise. We can see this quite clearly in Proverbs 19:1. A man of great wrath will pay the penalty for if you deliver him you will only have to do it again. The anger of this man is kind of like an eruption isn't it? And you can see from his actions he habitually gets himself into trouble. You have to rescue him and then again you have to rescue him because he's so consumed with his anger he can't put wisdom on, he can't live a wise life and just keeps getting into trouble, trouble, trouble. Ultimately this man in Proverbs 19:1 is acting like a fool and he is a fool because he's not putting on wisdom he's not learning from God. You all know what I mean but in your anger you've done or said something, they hate the moment and just snapped. And then next minute you walk away thinking oh what an idiot shouldn't have said that. You feel that because you were stupid you were being an idiot. You were reacting in anger and in the folly. This form of anger is easy, it's impulsive and it blinds us to push in our anger through filters like prayer in God's Word. We don't take a moment to reflect, we just explode and it makes us feel a wee bit good. There was an insightful article in *The Times* last year about the American anger crisis. I didn't know America was having an anger crisis but last year they were and the writer says anger is the lazy person's emotion, it's quick, it's binary, it's delicious and the more and more we are gorging on it. That's similar for us in Scotland. We're quick to anger, we're gorging on it.

This anger is ultimately bad as well because it leads us to sin. Proverbs 29 and 22 says a man of wrath stirs up strife and the one giving to anger causes much transgression. This is the sort of guy that you pray you don't get as a flatmate, isn't it? Stares up strife causes much transgression. These are almost the opposite words to Paul. You know Paul says be angry but do not sin.

[11 : 06] This man here by his impulsive anger is causing transgression. He is leading himself into sin which ultimately hurts him and hurts those around him. That's why anger is bad. Mark Twain also wrote a very insightful comment. He says anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than anything on which it is poured out upon. It hurts us. It leads us to transgression. It leads us to sin. Anger unchecked and uncontrolled hurts and it hurts those around us. On the flip side, we all have what's called emotional intelligence. We can look at people and the three top emotions that people can sense our anger, happiness and sadness from a facial expression. So we can all sense in a room when someone's angry. You know we can see it on people and it can spill out of them. And sometimes we think oh we need to repress us so no one can see our anger. Repressing it into our heart what we are actually doing is refining it. We're making it more toxic in our lives. Again in his book *Good and Angry*, David Paulson talks about this. He talks about a lady called Helen who was in her 60s and he commented about her that her anger had destroyed almost all her relationships in her life. It cost her jobs, friendships, relationships. She spoke of grievances that went back decades and he says her anger was fresh like a fire. David Paulson wrote her rage seeded continually, barely controllable on the edge of exploding. It's an awful anger isn't it?

It's just ugly. And the writer of Proverbs tells us not to make friends with this person in Proverbs 22, 24. Make no friendship with a man given to anger nor go with a wrathful man. The writer of Proverbs knows all too well that this anger is seeding underneath, ready to strike out. So the wise need to recognize it and move past it. The truly wise take it to our other Lord Jesus Christ. Take their anger to him, take their heart to him and learn from him to be wise. But this anger here is ugly from Helen and that leads us on to our final point this evening. And I would say that the ugly anger that we have in Proverbs is a type of anger that does not look to be resolved. The type of anger that destroys and distorts relationships. Proverbs 30, 30 free is a very interesting one that says, for pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood and pressing the angry produces strife. You know this person here cannot control themselves and the pressure is on and things are happening if they have a busy workload at work, the kids are going mental. What happens? They just lash out, they produce strife wherever they go. They don't have the ability to push their anger through any sort of filter. Shakespeare writes kind of on this theme in Othello, man in rage strikes out at those that wish him the best. And this is so true of this ugly type of anger. It's waiting to lash out, it's waiting to hurt, it's waiting to cut. It's so ugly in relationships. And it's normally unfortunately for us the ones that we love, the ones that we are closest to, that this anger strikes out at the most. Our spouse, our children, our dear friends normally get to see the ugly side of us more than an acquaintance.

We would just ball it up if it was them. I read this week of Walt Ragman, I think that's his last name, in the book called Ragman, Another Cry of Faith and he's a great illustration of this. Walt recounts a story between him and him in his mouth that his wife had bought a small flat, it's like a one-bedroom thing, so the bed and the living room kitchen were all one. And he says he would frequently get into these arguments because they're just in such tape proximity. And Walt's solution to this was to grab his jacket and storm out the flat and go a walk. And he says one night that him and his wife had a real barn, a real barny or a real argument and it goes to the temperature got so high, so hot that he stormed out and as he stepped out the door caught inside of his jacket with the keys on the other side of the door. So Walt in his anger tried to pull the jacket, boom come free. So Walt had two options, either to go a long walk in the pouring rain or to knock the door. So a few moments passed and Walt decided eventually to knock the door. And the door opened immediately and his wife burst out laughing because the whole time she had seen the jacket corner going up and down as he's trying to free it. And Walt had a choice then. He says in that moment I could have simply laughed with her and our humour would have provided the bridge to reconciliation. But I refused to do so. I gathered up my jacket, walked out into the rainy evening, a prisoner of my own refusal to laugh. To see the ugliness of this anger doesn't seek to be resolved. How it isolates people. How ultimately it makes them foolish. All Walt had to do was laugh with his wife there and reconciliation could have happened. It could have been the first step but he didn't chose to grab his jacket and walk out in the pouring rain. Proverbs 27 verse four says wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming. It is ultimately ugly and unattractive. Walt points this out. It doesn't look for reconciliation and the writer of Proverbs knows this. That's why he says in 193 when a man's folly brings him to ruin his heart rages against the Lord. Anger is ugly, it is bad and it blinds us to be reconciled to God. In our anger we don't want answers sometimes.

We just want to rage. Take this scenario that has happened to me before. You come out your car and you step into a puddle and you go for a job interview and you're instantly, why God? Why did you let this happen to me? You rage instantly and your anger you lash out. Even though the Lord has given me eyes to see that puddle and when I step in it is my own fault but I rage towards him. The Lord has given us the Bible that can save us from drowning in our own anger but instead we blind ourselves in our sin and we don't apply that wisdom to our hearts and minds.

And that's the real issue here tonight. That anger is a heart issue. It can't be solved purely by an intellectual reasoning. It's not a problem to be solved.

[19:18] Self-control, yes, can help but ultimately self-control will not keep your anger at bay. There's a good example from history from this. There was a guy called Seneca who was a philosopher and I think it was 49 AD years around those and he had this job to teach this 12 year old how to conduct himself in court and Seneca says that this child had a murderous temper and he recognized immediately that he had to mitigate this anger with philosophy. The young boy's name was Nero and he said whenever the young boy hugged him and said Seneca I love you I would never hurt you and his heart he knew that this boy didn't mean any of it because his anger was just seeding underneath. Seneca's philosophy never changed the life of Nero. It never impacted his heart. World philosophies, worldviews generally do not impact the heart. What we need is something, something outside ourselves to put a new heart within us and that's one of the promises of the gospel that when we encounter Jesus our affections are changed. Things that would rail as before become slow because we look to him for what angers him first. We look to Jesus and look to his love to live our lives.

Jesus even says in Matthew for where your treasure is there your heart will be also. So anger comes from a misaligned heart. We get angry because our pride has been dented. We get angry when things aren't going our way. What Jesus is saying we need a new heart within us. Proverbs tells us that as well. Proverbs 4, 23 keep your heart with all vigilance is the writer. From it flows the spring of life. So true biblical wisdom is applying the words of Jesus Christ to our heart.

Living for him and him alone. So how do we do control our anger to reflect on it as a group? Well as a group we hold one another accountable. We read from Ephesians 4 you know we are told to put off former things and put on the new. And as a church we are accountable to one another so as we live our lives daily we hold each other accountable. And secondly we bring all our anger and our heart to our Lord Jesus Christ. One of the big things that people think is God just wants the best of you. Like your achievements or your goodness. The beauty of the gospel is Christ came for all of you. Your brokenness, your heart, your anger and he gives healing, restoration and a new heart. So for us to become wise is looking to our Lord Jesus Christ loving him, loving the things that he loves and being angry at the things that anger him. Let us pray. Dear heavenly Father we just thank you tonight for all the emotions that you have given us. Lord we would pray that we would bring all of them before your throne. Lord that we would really look to you and push our anger our feelings through the filters of prayer and biblical wisdom. That we would really put off anything that would hinder us.

And Lord we thank you that you gathered us as a community. That we can keep one another accountable in your work. So Lord if we're sitting here tonight and we are raging against you in our hearts. We would pray that you would send your Holy Spirit that comforter to show us the love of Jesus Christ. Lord that we would become wise in your eyes and we would live that out daily in our lives.

In Jesus name. Amen.