

### **ECCLESIASTES 7:9-14**

Do not be quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools. Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to the one who possesses it.

Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that mortals may not find out anything that will come after them.

### **MATTHEW 5:21-26; 7:1-5**

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment": But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool" you will be liable to the hell of fire. So, when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the

alter and go, first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny...

Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

## **ANGER PROBLEM**

**Ecclesiastes 7: 9-14**  
**Matthew 5:21-26; 7:1-5**

We live in an angry world! Even the weather is angry. And who can blame Mother Nature who must be choking from all the pollution she must inhale? So, as she coughs, she sends us atmospheric rivers, droughts and heatwaves to punish us and get our attention for cleaning up our act.

She really doesn't have much of a sense of humor.

In our country, it is popular to be angry. Tune into your favorite news network and the anchors are very skilled at raising your ire. Everybody has a gripe and some even take it to the extreme of violence against perceived perpetrators. Welcome to our world, \_Brazil! The symptoms of anger reveal themselves in multifarious ways. Who will the victims of our anger be? And could it be that most often, the victim turns out to be ourselves? Ancient Roman philosopher Marcus Aurilius said:

Doesn't Solomon put it beautifully when he says, *Do not be quick to anger for anger lodges in the bosom of our souls?* I try to remember this on the golf course. Sure, sometimes I get a little annoyed by the slow play of the group ahead—after all, most of the guys I play with are older than I am. But the major source of my anger is generally myself. I can forgive physical errors—golf is a very difficult game and even Tiger Woods sometimes hits it out of bounds. It's the unforced, mental errors that drive me bananas.

And then I let myself have it! I thought we were supposed to be having fun out there. Yes, anger is a problem no matter at whom it is directed.

Consciously check yourself sometime and see if you can get through

a day without getting PO'd about something, even if it's small. Most times it will be small. But anger does have a way of sneaking up on us with little or no warning. And then, Boom! It consumes us. Our cortisone level and our blood pressure rise; our muscles contract while our heart and breathing rates accelerate and whatever joy we might have been experiencing in the former moment is gone...just like that.

Today, I would like to examine with you the spiritual implications of our Anger Problem. And let us begin with the words of Jesus himself during his Sermon on the Mount: *You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment.*

From a spiritual perspective Anger, then, is a Problem on two levels. First, it has a potentially destructive consequence initially to someone other than ourselves. How many times have you gone off on someone and really and truly hurt their feelings? Ha Ha. Too many to count, right? But that often has a boomerang effect because while we may have gotten satisfaction in spearing them, we later regret having done so. As writer Ambrose Bierce wrote, "Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret." And once words are spoken, a punch is

thrown, or a weapon is fired, it's too late to take it back. And once you start a war, Mr. Putin, you become a victim of it yourself. So obviously, the second level of consequence occurs in our own internal worlds.

Therefore, the *liability for judgment* is twofold.

Every problem, of course, has a solution. But in order to reach a conclusion, it would seem logical to understand the source of our Anger Problem which can then lead us to a solution. What is important to digest here is that we all know that anger carries with it a lot of energy—which is why some people like it and take pleasure in generating it. You can change the world with it! And you can, but what will that world look like?

But there has to be something beneath to make it so compelling. The answer is surprising—it's fear. And when you examine the genesis of fear, what you will find attached to it underneath is a concern with loss. And most often, it is the fear of losing control over something or someone, including their behavior. In spite of all of our bluster and the facades we display to the world, we are really very vulnerable inside. Loss leads to hurt. And pain requires a response from us.

It is the response to fear that we are concerned with on the spiritual level. What are we going to do with all of this energy our anger has generated? In her book, "A Course in Miracles", Marianne Williamson

states that “Anger is a cry for love.” And that makes a lot of sense when we understand that the antithesis of fear is love.

Jesus perfectly understood this. *If you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift.* You see, the question in the background begging to be answered is “Who needs to be loved here?” Is it you? Are you going to receive it by lashing out? Or is it the person who hacked you off who needs love? And how might you respond to that individual or group of people in a loving manner?

It’s hard. Jesus takes a radical approach to this when he says later in his Sermon regarding retaliation for a real or perceived wrong, *You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer; if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.*

Perhaps this is too radical for us. Should the Ukrainians simply welcome their invaders, most of whom do not want to be there and abhor the atrocities they are forced to commit, and invite them into their homes? How should victims of rape, discrimination and physical violence respond to

the Anger perpetrated against them? Don't we have every right to protect ourselves?

Life does not come with easy answers. But both Solomon and Jesus offer us a way of thinking about our Anger Problem. Just do this: the next time you feel your hackles rising, take a pause, breathe and be still. And ask yourself who needs to be loved here? What options do you have to respond? Most often, the answer will be to do nothing. You do have a right to protect yourself, but remember that *Anger lodges in the bosom of the fool*. Do nothing that you may regret later.

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