

Be Slow to Anger

*“The discretion of
a man deferreth
his anger; and it
is his glory to
pass over a
transgression.”
—Proverbs 19:11*

AS 2018 DRAWS TO A close, one word in particular seems to more and more identify itself with the many troubles and chaotic conditions in the world. It is anger. From the general citizenry to

the highest levels of government, anger seems to dominate the mood of society today. In our country alone, which has long been held up as an example of honest debate, tolerance and civility among its people and its leaders, unmitigated anger is now openly displayed, and even encouraged, on all sides of nearly every issue.

We should not be surprised by these conditions. The Scriptures speak prophetically of our day, and specifically of the anger that would come about as this “present evil world” is brought to an end, and the “new heavens and ... new earth” are established. (Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:13) “Why do the heathen rage?” the psalmist asks. “The nations were angry,” states John the Revelator. (Ps. 2:1; Rev. 11:18) The words “heathen” and “nations” in these verses are references to the masses of people. The rage and anger with which they speak and act, we are indeed witnessing at this very hour.

In the face of the anger which we now see about us on a daily basis, it is vitally important, as footstep followers of Christ, that we examine ourselves along this line. The true Christian cannot participate in, nor support, the sentiments of anger so much on display in today's world. Though we are to hate sin, we are not to be angry, vengeful or judgmental toward sinners. Judgment "in righteousness," the Scriptures state, will be the work of the next age.—Acts 17:31

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CONSECRATED

Many Scriptures, in both the Old and New Testament, instruct us toward self-control and a proper rule over our own spirit. Such self-restraint allows us time to think and reflect prayerfully on the best way to respond in difficult or tense situations that arise during the experiences of life. Development of these traits is a very challenging part of our Christian growth and maturity, but is ultimately required if we are to be successful in our walk of faith.

"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." (Prov. 14:29) The key to following the admonition of this verse lies within the innermost part of our being, the heart. One who finds himself habitually having difficulty controlling his anger most likely has a heart condition that is predisposed to argument and contention, rather than toward the sentiments of love, mercy or kindness. Before one can correct the more outward problem of displayed anger, he must first examine, and often cleanse, his impure heart. The Apostle Paul says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our

hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”—Heb. 10:22

With our hearts centered on proper Godlike characteristics, we are then able to begin conquering our outward words and actions. We know that it is pleasing to our Heavenly Father that we avoid malice, anger and strife by displaying kindness, long-suffering and love in our dealings with others, even those who may speak or act against us. (Col. 3:8,12-14) “A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.”—Prov. 15:18

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” (Prov. 16:32) This verse suggests that, from God’s standpoint, one who exercises proper self-control in the affairs of life has an inner strength of character superior to the mighty deeds of men. God himself is the greatest example of these attributes. The psalmist says, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”—Ps. 103:8

By contrast, one who does not have proper control over his words and actions is described as, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” (Prov. 25:28) Such a city would be vulnerable to easy destruction by an enemy. A character in this condition would likewise be wide open to the penetrating darts of our Adversary, with little defense left for protection.

The opening verse of our lesson tells of a still higher level of development along these lines. It points out that while it is important for us to learn how to control our anger, it is even more pleasing

to God that, whenever possible, we overlook the transgression entirely, especially if it is not in direct violation of some vital principle of truth. The Apostle Peter identifies this deeper stage of development as relating directly to love, when he says, “Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins.”—I Pet. 4:8, *Revised Version*

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:31,32) Regardless of what we see in this troubled world around us, however much anger appears to be the norm, we must conquer this enemy, putting it far away from our hearts, thoughts, words and actions, if we wish to be faithful followers of Christ. ■