

“WISDOM FOR CURBING OUR ANGER.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Text for Sermon: Proverbs 14:29; 19:11; 29:11, 20, 22

Introduction.

We are taking a deeper dive into many of the themes and topics in Proverbs, God’s book of practical wisdom for living wisely and well.

We all want to be seen as wise and we all want to live well. It sure beats the option. No one wants to be stupid and do dumb stuff. But we all do. Our default mode, our sinful human nature gets in the way and we do dumb stuff.

My prayer for us is the same as Paul’s prayer for the Christians in the church in Colossae.

Colossians 1:9-11 that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

I want us to be more grounded in God’s Word and God’s ways. I see too much of the world in us, too much worldly wisdom which is folly. The internet and social media are the biggest influencers in our lives today, we are drinking too deeply from that ocean of information. Sin has made us all fools and we need God’s wisdom.

Proverbs is about getting us to think less worldly and more wisely. Proverbs is about getting us to live more coram deo, before the face of God, with a greater daily awareness of the presence of God. In the end this will bear good fruit and bring us the most lasting peace and joy.

Proverbs 4:7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

Whatever it costs, whatever it takes, get wisdom. Read a chapter of Proverbs every day. Today is the 16th so read chapter 16. In a month you will get through them all. Then start over.

Anger, hot temper.

It is safe to say all of us have lost our temper one time or another, and we have all watched someone lose their temper. All of us have regrets about times we wish we had kept a lid on our lips or just stayed silent.

Let's be honest, we all have a great capacity to be aggravated, ticked off, irritable, frustrated, impatience, annoyed, hot tempered, in a word angry.

A spouse's faultfinding, a child's disobedience, a boss's unfair criticism, a stranger's rudeness, a friend's disrespect or betrayal, someone's passive aggression.

Anger is a powerful emotion, but it is more than just an emotion, it involves our minds, hearts and wills. It comprises our beliefs, feelings, actions and desires.

Anger is never just anger, it is always a symptom of something deeper. Anger is a selfish, self-centered response to something we find unacceptable. Analyze your anger, where it comes from.

We become angry because:

- our pride has been wounded,
- our plans have been frustrated,
- our time has been inconvenienced,
- our authority has been challenged,
- our comfort has been disturbed,
- our expectations have been disappointed,
- our desires have been denied,
- our reputation has been threatened.

Anger is a selfish response in the face of unmet expectations, injured pride, not getting my way, my own sense of self-righteousness, of self-importance, I am right, they are wrong. Anger is a secondary emotion that reveals primary underlying feelings like fear, powerlessness, hurt, sadness. It exposes the idols in our hearts, what is most precious to us.

Yes, there is a good kind of anger that is not sin, a righteous anger. That kind of anger is more about God than me, about God's honor and holiness. It is directed at injustice, wickedness, ungodliness. I am not focusing on that because it is rare and that is not the kind of anger that is destroying our relationships and our world.

The Fool Gives Vent to His Anger — The Wise Person Rules His Spirit.

Proverbs 29:11, 29:20; 14:29

Proverbs 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

Proverbs 29:20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 14:29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

The fool is controlled by his anger. The wise person controls his anger. Either we learn to control our anger, or our anger will control us.

Our culture often says: "Express yourself." Proverbs says: "Rule yourself."

The world says: "I have a right to my feelings" There may be truth in that, but Scripture adds: You do not have a right to sin because of your feelings.

The fool says: "I can't help it. That's just how I am." Proverbs calls that folly, not authenticity.

The moment a fool is provoked, you hear about it. He has a short fuse and a quick temper. He has no restraint, no self-control. He says everything he is thinking and when he is done, he never thinks he has said enough. Whatever emotion or feeling or attitude he has, he lets it loose.

By calling the angry person a fool, Solomon is not saying he is necessarily unintelligent. You know you can be extremely smart and still be a fool. Just look at today's liberal universities. What he is saying is that anger makes us fools who act foolishly. When our temper takes control:

- our judgment becomes distorted,
- our words become reckless,
- our motives become exaggerated,
- the offenses become larger,
- the consequences become harder to repair.

We can be very intelligent and still be extraordinarily foolish when angry.

Have you ever stopped to consider the utter folly in cursing and yelling and becoming impatient with an inanimate object? A lawn mower, anything with a pull start, computers, phones, golf clubs. Anger has been called temporary madness, a brief moment of insanity.

Every one of us has that moment, that interval of time between the inner stirring of anger in our heart and the outward expression of that anger. That interval, that moment, however brief is so crucial, we should pay more attention to it.

That moment to pause, to take a breath, to count to ten. Augustine said he learned to say the alphabet before giving vent to his impulses.

Proverbs 19:11 Good sense makes one slow to anger.

Good sense is God-like sense. This is a most God-like quality, for God is slow to anger and quick to forgive, abounding in grace and goodness.

Justin Martyr was once asked what he thought was Christ's greatest miracle. He said it was Christ's patience and silence in the midst of His great trials and torture.

Keep your eyes on Jesus, behold Him on the cross, consider seriously His Words, spoken and unspoken. His care for others, His forgiveness of His enemies. What control, what restraint. It is a meekness that is strength. It is a trait most Christ-like.

The slow man is the strong man because he has learned to govern himself rather than being governed by his passions.

Remember Joseph with his brothers who sold him into slavery.

Remember David sparing the life of Saul who was out to kill him.

The men of God in Scripture brought their own anger under God's control.

We must be quick to catch the stirrings of anger in our own hearts, quick to stop them before they burst out in folly and sin.

Parents, must be quick early on to correct and train our children, lest anger is allowed to run uncontrolled.

God is not just looking for outward constraint, outward control. God looks on the heart, on the deep-rooted desires and passions and thoughts that give birth to anger. He knows how we may not speak or show it, but how much we mull over what we wish we could say or do, the vengeance we would like to seek, even if we never do.

When we indulge the least of these thoughts we are sinning and giving the devil a foothold, an opportunity.

Pray constantly about this, ask God daily for divine assistance to keep our minds and hearts and words submitted to Him. We need great grace and strength for this.

Don't let the sun go down.

One example of self-control is not letting the sun go down on your anger.

This shows restraint. This shows putting love over self. This shows wisdom to fight Satan's desire to gain a foothold. Satan loves angry people.

They say time heals all wounds, but that is not true. Time by itself does nothing. Time with confession, correction, repentance, and forgiveness heals wounds.

Delaying reconciliation almost always makes reconciliation harder.

Unresolved anger settles in our hearts, hardens and leads to bitterness. It

can begin to infect every part of our lives and all of our relationships. Kill anger now before it kills you forever.

Give your anger an expiration date. By the end of the day. Don't nurse a grudge, don't let a relational wound fester over time.

Christian anger is Christ-like, it seeks to restore peace and reconciliation.

The Fool Escalates — The Wise Person Overlooks. Proverbs 29:22; 19:11

Proverbs 19:11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Proverbs 29:22 A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.

The angry person escalates offenses into conflicts.
The wise person knows when to let an offense go.

What does "overlook an offense" mean? It does ***not*** mean:

- tolerating abuse,
- ignoring serious sin,
- protecting a criminal,
- refusing appropriate discipline,
- avoiding necessary confrontation.

There are times when love requires us to speak.

But it does mean that we do not make every personal offense a battle. Ask yourself:

Is this something that needs to be addressed, or something I need to learn to overlook?

That question alone could save many marriages, friendships, families, and churches.

It is glory to overlook an offense. It is glory to pass over a transgression.

We are all human, we are all sinners. So dealing with offenses, insults, hurts will be a challenge. The question will always be are we going to be a slave to our emotions or are we going to be masters over them? Will we

react selfishly and self-righteously, or will we respond redemptively and find joy in overlooking an offense?

Wisdom does not mean never becoming angry; it means learning to bring anger under the rule of God so that we are slow to anger, gracious toward offenses, restrained in retaliation, ready to forgive, and respond to wrongs in a way that reflects the character of Christ.

It is to a man's glory and honor to overlook an offense, or act as if he didn't hear it, or if he did hear it, to decide to forgive it and remember it no more.

Proverbs 12:16 The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.

If we are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and made a new man in the image and likeness of Christ, then patience and forgiveness will replace resentment, anger and malice.

This is more than biting one's tongue, more than holding it all in. When we do that, the poison remains in our hearts. This is restraint from a pure motive, a motive of love. This is the triumph of grace, this is most godly.

Two of God's favorite laboratories for sanctification are the home and the highway. That's where He exposes our hearts and what's in them and how we are progressing in the Gospel.

The people we should love most often receive our worst behavior. Why? Because familiarity removes restraint.

When I meet with couples for marriage preparation one of the sessions is always on conflict and how to have a fair family fight. In that session I ask a few questions about their home growing up. What were the conflicts like, how did their parents fight or argue or disagree. Like parent, like child. We reap what we sow. What we sow produces a harvest.

Our homes are the breeding ground for all kinds of emotions and behaviors and examples. It is hard for children to rise above the levels of behavior exhibited by the most influential adults in their lives. Give

thought and prayer to living coram deo in your homes, and breaking old ways.

Application: victory over anger.

Are we Proverbs 29:11 people? Do I give full vent to my spirit, or do I quietly hold it back?

Scripture doesn't teach anger management. It teaches victory over sin and power to govern our spirits. You can't willpower your way out of anger. We aren't looking to manage our anger, we are seeking to kill our sinful anger.

We begin by not trusting our anger and believing the lies it tries to tell us. Like we are not responsible and anger is someone else's fault. My anger is always my choice.

Identify the idolatry in our hearts, what we most care about or most desire or what right has been denied. What do you lose our temper over or what bitterness do you hold on to?

Start by looking inward. This is the key to dealing with any conflict. Can you see the log in your own eye before you point to or call out the speck in someone else's eye.? And can you be so honest and humble as to be willing to admit your sin is bigger than their sin? Don't we know our sin better than anyone else's? Can we see we need grace just as much as the other person? Recognize, own and acknowledge our own sin, our own contribution, and repent.

Surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit. The antidote to anger is the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. Christ gives us a new way to live.

"Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

The Spirit does not merely make us less angry. He makes us more like Christ. The ultimate answer to Proverbs' teaching on anger is not: "Try

harder to control your temper." Self-control is not merely stronger willpower. It is Christ's character increasingly being formed in us.

Husbands and wives, moms and dads, brothers and sisters, friends and family take to heart what a massive difference these Spirit-produced qualities would make in our relationships, love, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control. This is the God-honoring alternative to rage and hot tempers.

The final key in overlooking an offense is being able to forgive as we have been forgiven.

There is no greater logical fallacy or contradiction in the entire universe, or the history of mankind, than for those of us who have been forgiven all our sins against our holy God — every sinful thought, word, and deed — to withhold forgiveness from others (Matthew 18:21–35).

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Make it your joy to be slow to anger and quick to overlook offenses and joyfully delight in your Father's forgiveness as you forgive as you have been forgiven.