

*"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty."* Surely, we can all aspire to be like the mighty! To be better than them, now that would be an achievement! The Hebrew word translated here for mighty is "gibbor" which means valiant or champion! It is used of Christ in Isaiah 9v6 but that does not mean that those slow to anger are better than he because of course Christ was an exemplary example of doing just that. He endured such contradiction of sinners against himself!

There are several passages which have a similar content to our consideration this evening, but which have a different analogy attached to their teaching.

Proverbs 19v11 *"The discretion of a man defers his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression"*.

Proverbs 25v28 *"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls"*.

Proverbs 14v29 *"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly"*.

Proverbs 15v18 *"A wrathful man stirreth up strife, but he that is slow to anger appeases strife"*.

There is also an echo of this found in the letter of James.

1v19 *"Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear slow to speak slow to wrath"*.

A way to end strife then is not to react quickly to things which annoy or offend us. The modern world seems bent on being offended and reacting quickly and strongly to cancel the offender and put them in their place by the vocal power of the majority. The Truth has not part in such crowd behaviour. Mob rule has no place amongst those keen to follow the teachings of Christ.

Anger is something that needs to be managed carefully. God has the most reason to be angry above all others, but He restrains Himself and in patience often waits so long that many believe He has forgotten or will not take any corrective action.

He waited 40 years when they crucified His Son, the deepest provocation.

He waited 400 years until the iniquity of the Amorites was full, all sin angers Him.

He waited centuries whilst His people Israel disobeyed Him and turned away, He was certainly angry about that.

He waited 120 years before He destroyed the world with a flood, even though mankind had thoroughly angered Him.

He has waited thousands of years and has still to end the foolish rule of man, even though He is taxed every day with their blasphemies!

His mercy is evidenced on a daily basis through His extensive forbearance, would we not take action much more quickly than He does? *“All day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people”* Romans 10v21.

Anger is something that we need to control else it will control us. It is like an unclean spirit that can take over our moods, our thoughts and our actions. Turning the other cheek is the very opposite of striking back, but we feel the need to lash out either verbally or physically and then afterwards have regrets.

Many have thought to implement delaying strategies, like counting to 10, or refusing to answer, but the silent treatment, as some call it, can go too far, and it can be vindictive in its own way. It should be later not never going back to previous necessary ground to talk through.

The book of Proverbs deals quite extensively with various behavioural issues and anger management is one of them. The Bible accepts anger is a natural phenomenon which we even share with God Himself. However, there is an under pinning element that this needs to be managed even from an early age, and must not be left to develop unguided by higher morality.

In Proverbs 20v2 provocation to anger, in certain circumstances, is stated as being sinful. So the claim that we are in total control of our own anger and it is always within our jurisdiction to fully influence needs to be carefully considered.

Surely no one can doubt that keeping anger in check is a good thing. Only those who worship at the altar of self would argue that surprising any anger is always bad for you!

In proverbs 27v4 it says that *“Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous but who is able to stand before envy?”* The idea here of wrath seems to be more intense than anger. It carries the notion of poison, fever, heat and rage. The word translated outrageous implies gallop, inundate or conquer, so even all consuming? In the presence of an angry person there is little you can do but weather the storm. A situation with two angry people will not end well, for one or both!

So if the feeling arises the saintly person will slow it all down, demonstrating his discretion and understanding, and superiority over those not able to handle their own emotions.