

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Numbers 20:1-13

Another lesson we can learn from Moses' life.

INTRODUCTION:

Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you'll ever live to regret!

There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, to hammer a nail in the back fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence.

Then it gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say 'I'm sorry,' the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as real as a physical one."

My childhood background – my dad and anger – still angry – Unstable, like nitro – ironic now his med.

READ: Numbers 20:1-13

There are tremendous consequences caused by anger that is freely expressed.
We will again take a look at Moses' life this week.

SEVEN FORMS OF ANGER MOSES FACED:

Most of us think of Moses more as a spiritual giant than someone who has a significant anger problem. Today I invite you to take a whirlwind trip through Moses' life from his early years up until the time he was an old Man. There may be some things we can apply to our own lives.

The first glimpse we get of Moses' anger was when it was expressed as a

1. **Killing anger (Exodus 2:11-12)**

Remember? Moses has just graduated with the finest education the world had to offer – from the royal schools of Egyptian Wisdom – he goes for a walk and spots the Egyptian beating a Hebrew. His anger wells up within him. ***Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand (Exodus 2:12).*** Guess they had cross-cultural issues back then too.

Ouch...the consequence of this uncontrolled anger? It didn't work out too well for the murdered Egyptian, and it didn't work out well for Moses either. He flees the royal court and becomes a refugee in the desert for the next 40 years. He does forty years in solitary confinement. During the 40 years he got a lot of work done on the inside, but when he got out...he still had the anger problem. Problems like this just don't go away!

It doesn't take more than a couple of weeks on the outside – back in Egypt – before we see the next flare up.

You could call it...

2. Argumentative anger (Exodus 11:8)

It's the tenth plague and Moses has had just about enough of Pharaoh. His lies, his broken promises, his arguments...do you know anybody like that? It's the same old thing time after time. Moses blew his cork. Exodus 11:8 indicates, *Moses, - hot with anger, left Pharaoh.* The Lord sees this new outburst and explains the whole situation. *The Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you – so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt."* God was assuring and calming Moses. *"Hey, listen, it is all part of my plan – he is being this way so I can reveal my greatness. Relax. Don't get all bent out of shape!"*

If you're flexible – you won't get all bent out of shape.

Have you ever thought that God put that lying, cheating, good for nothing dirty rotten scoundrel into your life so that you could reveal his greatness to everybody around you? But when you go to the scoundrel's level...the whole thing is blown!

3. Thwarted anger (Exodus 16:20)

Moses didn't learn his lesson. His anger continued. Next God has just given the manna for food. Moses is finishing off his instructions for gathering manna. Exodus 16:19, *Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning." However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell.* Now, Moses got the last laugh on that one. All he had to do was give that knowing smile and say "Told you so!" Walk by – plug his nose and say "Got stinky tents eh?" or "Is that your floor moving or is that maggots I see?" But it irked Moses that they had thwarted his instructions and the scripture records Moses' anger again at the end of Exodus 16:20; *So Moses was angry with them.*

4. Destructive anger (Exodus 32:15-20)

Moses has just received the most precious item the world had ever had. Exodus 32 describes the tablets upon which were written the 10 commandments. Look at Exodus 32:15: ¹⁵ *Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.* ¹⁶ *The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.* Remember, the Israelites had made the golden calf? Look at Moses' response: ¹⁹ *When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.*

Moses totally lost it and destroyed the most precious item the world had ever had. YOUR TEMPER IS ONE OF YOUR MOST VALUABLE POSSESSIONS...DON'T LOSE IT. When you do...you stand to lose other valuable possessions as well!

This wasn't enough though.

Occurrence #5 revolves around... Pride ...

5. Prideful anger (Numbers 16:12, 15)

Moses gives an order and someone doesn't obey it and rather than just following disciplinary action Moses loses his cool again. The Scripture records: ¹⁵ *Moses became very angry.*

ANGER is just one letter from Danger. Oh, Moses, you are so close to danger: can't you see it?

The next episode of anger is recorded in the passage read for us earlier. Numbers 20:1-13. It records a...

6. Rebellious anger (Numbers 20:2, 6-12)

This time his anger led him to rebel against God's instruction. There was no water for the people in the desert. Of course the people began to badger Moses. The Lord tells Moses what to do in Numbers 20:8, ⁸ *Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.*

Now Moses had all he could take of the people's complaining. He is burning with anger once again. Pick up the Scripture at verse 9, ⁹ *So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him.* ¹⁰ *He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?"* ¹¹ *Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gusted out, and the community and their livestock drank.*

Remember the different times, the Lord has worked with Moses and even explained Himself to Moses. He withheld the consequences of Moses' anger over and over again. Finally, this time the consequence of anger strikes Moses. Look at verse Numbers 20:12, ¹² *But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."*

Moses just lost everything he had worked for during all these years. He lost everything he had waited for, everything he had longed for and lived for: the Promised Land. Oh, the tragic consequences of anger. Friend, don't be fooled, don't be lulled to sleep by withheld judgment. Your anger will cost you dearly...perhaps the very things, relationships, you have lived for! **My dad's anger has cost him dearly...**

And even this didn't cure him of his anger. A while later there's Moses again blowing his cool in Numbers 31. We won't take time to look at it in detail, but ...

7. Frustrated anger (Numbers 31:13-14)

Enough said. Moses never did gain victory over the battle with anger. In fact, at the very end of his life, just before he dies, we get a little glimpse of just how deep Moses' problem was. He is explaining to the people why he won't be able to get into the Promised Land.

Look at Deuteronomy 1:37, *Because of you the Lord became angry with me also and said, "You shall not enter it either."* Moses illustrates a simple lesson with this statement:

*Angry people play the blame game
– Deuteronomy 1:37; 3:26*

Angry people have many others to blame for their anger. It was Moses' own fault. If you have a tendency to lose your temper it is really your own fault.

Don't blame the actions of your kids. Don't blame the boss. Don't blame the dumb dog. Don't blame your family. Don't blame the government. Don't blame the system. Don't blame your husband. Don't blame your wife. It is nobodies fault but your own...and, my friend; you will pay the consequences of loss for your anger.

Let's apply Moses' life-lessons to our own lives today...

APPLICATION:

1. In God's grace he withholds judgment.

(Romans 2:5-11)

Rom 2:5-11 - But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism.

From Moses' life we see that God in His grace will hold back judgment over and over again. He is patient with you, wanting everyone to come to repentance. In his grace He longs to save you from the consequences. He speaks to you, He convicts you, He teaches you, He brings you into church to hear it again from his Word. You must have victory over anger or you will pay. First step is to confess sin. **1 John 1:9.**

2. Sown seeds of sin eventually yield consequences.

(Numbers 20:12; Galatians 6:7-8)

Num 20:12 - ... "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature from that nature will reap destruction.

You've already taken that first step of salvation.

But pastor I've tried to get the victory. I've prayed for it. I've asked for forgiveness and tried again dozens of times.

Maybe with you it is not anger. Maybe there is another lingering problem. Sin has crept in. Lust/pornography, a habit/addiction, your tongue/gossip, your thought-life, bitterness, negative attitude/an unforgiving spirit. You've tried and tried and you keep coming up against it only to fail again.

I understand your predicament completely. We all go through the same thing. Paul understands your predicament; in Romans 7:18 he records his own struggle: ^{7-18b} ***I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.***

You see, **when** you became a Christian he gave you the desire to live for Him, to live according to Jesus' ways. The Lord gave you a desire change so that you would desire to do what is good.

But there is another work of grace that He longs to do in your life.

3. There is power both to will and to do His good pleasure.
(Philippians 2:12-13)

^{2:13} for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

My friend, don't settle for anything but total and complete spiritual victory in every area of your life. God has the power *to sanctify you through and through...your whole spirit, soul and body [can] be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).*

But Pastor, I have asked him a dozen times to deliver me from this sin. Why has he not done it?

Because you have not yet come to the point of total self-surrender, because there is still a dependence on self and you need to be completely and utterly convinced that more discipline, more work, more effort will make no difference. You must be convinced that you are absolutely powerless, even as a Christian, to do God's perfect will. You cannot do it. You need to come to the point Paul did when he cried out in anguish: ^{7:24} ***What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*** Have you come to that point yet? If you have...thank God because He is already working mightily in your life. Are you ready to take the next step necessary to receive his transforming work? You must humbly, completely, consecrate **your all** to Him - present yourself as a living sacrifice. Cry before him Abba Father, in dependence. In exchange for your all he will give you his all. In the emptying of self he will give the infilling power of the Holy Spirit. You must be entirely sanctified – **set apart** for his holy purpose. It is that Holy Spirit, in the life of the entirely sanctified, that will ***work in you to will and to act according to his good purpose?*** He will transform you from a slave to sinfulness to a slave to righteousness.

Anger Management? You can take a course on it. You can sit in a group session with others. You can wrestle on your own and keep failing. The only way to truly defeat this in your life, like any other major issue, is by surrendering to the Holy Spirit. He is the power of God helping you through it.

Don't be discouraged if it's taking a while and not getting better. If you have committed this to God, asking for supernatural help to overcome it, then He is working in and through you. He is not disappointed in you.

READ: The Shack, pp. 186-187