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Daily Devotional - Friday, May 25, 2018 - Righteous Anger on Display

MAY 25TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Numbers 25:1-18

Think about the times you have felt angry—what were the usual causes? In all honesty, most of us would have to admit that our irritation is often for selfish reasons. The book of James tells us that “the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” (James 1:20). However, there is such a thing as righteous indignation, and it can be exercised to promote the work of God.

In today’s passage, we find an excellent example of this in Phinehas, who rose up to execute Zimri and Cozbi for their evil deeds. For this act, he was commended by God with the following words: “Phinehas ... has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them” (Num. 25:11). God looked into the heart of Phinehas, saw his passion, and called it “My jealousy.” Of course, we cannot take the law into our own hands and begin executing people, but we can have the same attitude of heart that Phinehas had. This was a man who loved God so ardently that he couldn’t help but hate evil. He displayed the same wrath that drove Jesus to go through the temple with a whip of cords. (See John 2:13-17.) In both of these instances, zeal for God’s interests was demonstrated with anger.

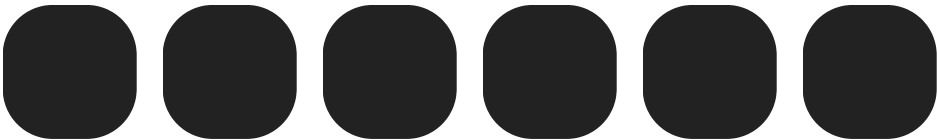
How can we do this? It’s a matter of having God’s perspective and standing up for what is right. We can station ourselves at the door of our heart and put a spear through any unholy thought

that tries to enter. Likewise, we can drive out the rivers of filth and immorality all around us, which try to enter our homes. As our love for God grows, so will our hatred of evil.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, May 24, 2018 - The Danger of Anger

MAY 24TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Ephesians 4:26-27

Anger is a powerful emotion that often causes damage, but it can also be righteous. In Isaiah 64:9, the prophet prays, “Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord.” This verse implies God measures His anger in a way that fits each occasion. Today’s passage teaches that the Lord also expects us to learn to control our anger so it’s appropriate and doesn’t cause us to sin.

There is a line that must not be crossed if we want to guard against sinful anger. It’s obvious that verbal abuse and physical violence should be ruled out, but anger can lead to other sins that are just as deadly. When we see the following characteristics in our life, we’ve crossed the line:

Strife. Proverbs 29:22 says, “An angry man stirs up strife.” Although strife can take many forms, it always pits one person against another.

Bitterness. Psalm 30:5 says that the Lord’s anger is for a moment, and Ephesians 4:26 warns against staying angry overnight. Extended anger festers and eventually leads to bitterness.

Isolation. Whenever anger is nursed, people become separated from each other. Proverbs 16:28 warns against this by pointing out that “a slanderer separates intimate friends.”

Retaliation. Romans 12:19 addresses this directly: “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God.”

What should you do if you recognize any of these in yourself? The first step is to confess it as sin and make a determined effort to turn from it. Every time a bitter thought pops up, repent and release it to the Lord.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, May 23, 2018 - How to Have Steadfast Faith

MAY 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, May 23, 2018 - How to Have Steadfast Faith

Hebrews 11:1-31

The apostle James challenges us to understand the connection between faith and obedience. In James 2:17, he writes that faith without works is dead. In other words, we cannot have unshakeable beliefs without obeying.

Developing steadfast trust takes time. We are born spiritually through simple, childlike faith that receives Jesus as Savior. Convictions are nourished by a growing knowledge of God and a deepening confidence in Him. Experiencing His protection, provision, and power in moments of testing strengthens our beliefs. Daniel is a good example of this. Each time his loyalty was tested, he chose to depend on God. Sometimes the circumstances were thrust upon him—such as whether to eat food sacrificed to idols (Dan. 1:8). At other times, he voluntarily initiated a difficult situation in order to help (Dan. 2:24). In each case, he followed God's leading.

Hebrews 11 lists other examples of obedience as critical to steadfast faith. Noah, when warned about things not seen, obeyed God and built the ark. And at the Lord's direction, Abraham left home to go to a place not yet known to him. Then in the New Testament, Paul was planning to arrest Christians when he encountered the Savior. He made a complete turnaround: Despite threats, beatings, and shipwrecks, he obeyed God and preached the gospel.

Knowing and trusting God through His Son, experiencing His presence, and living obediently are the elements needed to develop an unshakeable faith. Jesus Himself said that our work is to believe in Him (John 6:29). With the Holy Spirit's help, each of us can have unwavering faith.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, May 22, 2018 - The Comfortable Church

MAY 22ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, May 22, 2018 - The Comfortable Church

Isaiah 6:8

I think it's fairly obvious that the society we live in is very self-centered, and this same characteristic can be present in a church. Whenever a local body of believers develops an inward focus, its fruitfulness in ministry begins to decrease, and each member's Christian walk is hindered. Many believers want their church to be cozy and comfortable. They come to listen to a nice sermon, fellowship with friends, and have their needs met. But God never intended for the gathering of His people to be like a country club; He calls us to join an army that will bring the gospel into enemy territory.

An effective church—one that poses a real threat to the enemy—is a body of disciplined people who have been taught the truth of Scripture, helped to mature spiritually, and trained for service. But all this is accomplished for the purpose of going out into the world, not for becoming a self-contained sanctuary of Christian comfort.

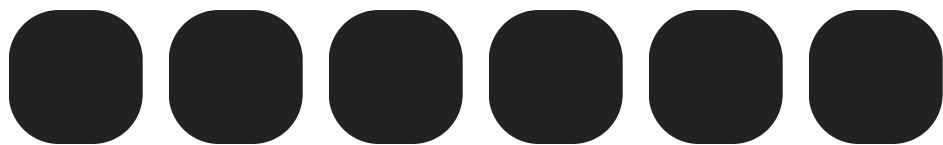
The urgency of the Lord's command and the desperate condition of humanity should motivate us to leave the safety of our Christian fellowships and deliver the message of salvation through Jesus. To avoid this responsibility is to miss the Father's plan for your life and the opportunity to help build His kingdom.

None of us want to waste time or energy on trivial things and thereby miss the exciting fulfillment of God's will. He has called us, not to a life of comfortable tradition, but to an adventure of obedience. Answer His call—you'll help fill His kingdom with people from every tribe and nation.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, May 21, 2018 - How Christ Modeled Humility

MAY 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Philippians 2:1-11

Although humility is not highly valued in our society, it's essential in the Christian life. And the one who set the pattern for it is Jesus Himself. Therefore, as His followers, we too should seek to have a humble spirit. Humility is lowliness of mind that does not seek to exalt or assert self, and from today's passage, we learn that it's characterized by several traits:

Humility is other-focused (Phil. 2:3-4). Christ was looking out for our interests when He came to earth to rescue us from sin and condemnation.

Humility doesn't grasp rights and privileges (Phil. 2:6-7). Although Jesus was fully God, He emptied Himself and took on the limitations of humanity.

Humility willingly serves others (Phil. 2:7). The Lord didn't come as a self-serving ruler who wanted to conquer and subjugate the world. Instead, He came as a lowly slave serving others.

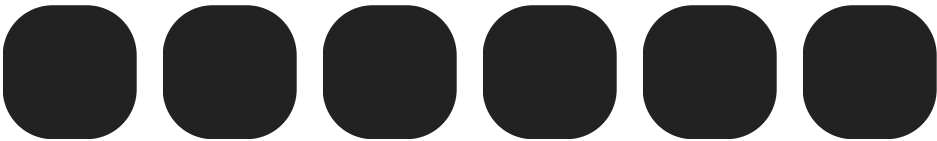
Humility obeys God (Phil. 2:8). The Son came to earth in full obedience to the Father. He did and said only what His Father commanded Him (John 5:19), including His ultimate act of obedience: laying down His life on the cross to pay for the sins of mankind.

These qualities are the exact opposite of the ambition, self-promotion, and self-advancement our culture values. From the world’s perspective, humility is weakness. But which takes more strength—to deny self or to promote self? Humility requires the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our natural self-centeredness. Instead of being a sign of weakness, it’s actually a sign of Christ’s life in us.

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