

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 11 Bitterness and Hatred

By

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All Scripture References are to NKJV unless otherwise noted in the text.

As you look at Jude, the book begins by saying, “I intended to write you a letter about our common salvation” (cf. [Jude 3](#)). But Jude found it necessary to write exhorting us to defend the faith, or to stand firm. And, you know, there is a serious tone about this conference. I have had the Holy Spirit just slam me a few times, but always in a very encouraging kind of way with the desire to make me stronger.

We have to remember that though we might not like exhortation—and I heard some of the winds blowing around, saying, “Oh I don’t know. This conference is going to be pretty heavy. I don’t know what’s going to happen.” Remember, “to exhort” means “to encourage.” And sometimes it is a kick in the pants to encourage us and I have been kicked a few times so far. But I am glad to know that it is God’s foot, as He is seeking to restore and build us up.

You know, Jude was angered in a righteous way because the faith was being hindered in some. It was being attacked by the Gnostic heretics. And in that anger he knew that these guys, and the church, needed to be exhorted to stand firm, to hang tough. We need that exhortation; we need to stand up for the faith, the ministry that has been delivered to us. The baton is being passed to all of us and we need to see the danger signs.

Let’s open up in prayer.

Lord, it is a privilege, nothing less than an incredible privilege, to be called ministers of the gospel. Lord, we have the goods. We have the greatest message heralded to human beings, and You put it in clay pots. And we remember, Lord, that we have feet of clay, and nothing more. Father, I pray that we would be faithful to the message, not only to proclaim it, but by Your grace that we would be conformed to it and be changed by it. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

I have a six-year-old son named Nathan. He thinks he is the hottest hockey player in New Mexico. We have an ice rink there and just last Sunday he won the State Championship in his division in ice hockey, so he thinks he is really tough. He is at that age where he is going through these things like: “I’m better than so and so” and “we’re the best.” He is the worst hockey player on the team, but he thinks he is the best. And I have not told him otherwise; I want to encourage him. He is getting to be that age where he is learning about love and hate and I am really trying to steer him toward love and away from the way of Cain, which we are covering today—the way of hatred.

When the elections were going on and it looked like a certain candidate was winning, Nathan started crying when he had found out. His mother and I were telling him about the candidates and he started crying because he was so mad. As I tucked him into bed that night and I said, “Nathan, we need to pray for our new president.” He said, “I’m never going to pray for him.” I said, “Well Nathan, he’s going to be our president. We need to do that.” “I’m not going to do it.” And so I was trying to do everything I could to explain the importance of lifting up our leaders in prayer, talking to a six-year-old can be difficult. So he just said, “Lord, I just pray that You would stop him from killing babies.” And you know, there was some insight in that little fellow. However, he still had a little bit of animosity and anger in his voice.

The feelings that are common to men are common to ministers. And we have been talking about some of the standard forward attacks of the enemy: lust, greed, lack of faith. But there is that back door which for some of us is a front door approach. Some of us have a real problem, as we are going to see, with the way of Cain.

Well, if you will turn with me to the Book of Jude, we will just notice a couple things. [Verse 11](#) says,

Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and [they] perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Jude has basically been running of a theme and that is: keeping yourself in the love of God, which he really ends up with. He starts by saying, “I wanted to write a letter of our common salvation but I found it necessary to exhort you because there have been snakes that have come into the fellowship, called gnostics, who are turning people aside, away” (cf. [Jude 3-4](#)). And so he gives example after example. He gives several groups: Israel—those who failed in their faith; and the angels—those who left their first estate. After giving examples of groups, in [verse 11](#) he gives three examples of individuals who failed to keep themselves in the love of God.

Cain is mentioned three times in the New Testament, always negatively. There is nothing good said about Cain. And the verse starts out by saying, “Woe.” This is the denunciatory kind of judgmental proclamation that the Old Testament prophets would often use. “Woe to them.”

Now how would you like to be a guy about whom nothing good is said? And the woe is not like the surfers, “Whoa.” This is like, “Woe!” You know, it is like Isaiah said, “Woe is me for I am undone” ([Isaiah 6:5](#)).

Cain is number one on the list as an example because he is the first one in Scripture to depart from the love of God through anger and bitterness and hatred.

I am going to be looking at a couple of verses in [Genesis 4](#), so we opened up with Jude, but let’s turn to Genesis 4. And as you are turning, you might think, “Jude? Why did he pick Cain?” Not only is he an example to the gnostics, but why would we choose to go through the way of Cain? Why is Cain chosen in this pastors’ conference as an example to ministers? It seems strange, but it is not. Cain was the second generation after experiencing one of the greatest works of God in creation. God had manifested Himself in creation through Adam and Eve. His parents were directly molded by God, creatively made by God. And already in the second generation, a man is filled with bitterness and hatred to go and to kill his brother.

I was given a William Granall book years ago. And in it he says, “None sink so far as those who come near heaven, because they fall from the greatest height.”

Remember years ago, when the television evangelist scam was going around, of course, the world made a mockery of that. It was in all of the newspapers and it was on CNN Nightly and on Nightline. They had some of their biggest ratings on Nightline over the fall of these characters. There was an article in a national newspaper entitled, “People Who Love.” And the article said,

TV evangelists profess their affection, but they throw bombshells. No word is more often mentioned in the babble of television evangelists than “love.” However [the article goes on

to say] this person is slamming this person and this person hates this person, but they are all saying that they love each other.

The way of Cain is a pattern that ministers have taken. It is a serious stumbling block. It is recorded in Genesis 4 that Cain departed from the presence of the Lord. God kicks him out of the garden, but you know what happened to Cain before he was kicked out of the garden was that he departed from the presence of the Lord in his heart. And what happened to Cain outwardly was merely a reflection of what was going on in his heart already.

And you know, the problem right there. Whenever you see a problem in a person's life, in a minister's life, the problem always begins with that person's relationship to God. In some way, he has departed from God. In some way, his relationship with God is not what it ought to be. And because of that, it becomes manifest in his relationships with other people—in the myriad of relationships that pastors have with other people. There are a lot of people in our lives as ministers, aren't there? I mean, think about your own little inner circle and work outwards. You have your wife and your children, your staff and your congregation. You have other pastors in town, other congregants in town that hear about you or might come to visit the church. If you have a radio ministry, you have people in different towns who have heard you and know of you. With all of those relationships, besides just the idea of, "I'm a minister giving the Word of God, speaking for the Lord." All of those things add pressure to a pastor's life. We all know that this is a very vulnerable spot. The ministry is very, very vulnerable. Whenever a person steps out in a public ministry, he is in a different kind of an arena.

I have a report. It is a 1991 survey that was given by Fuller Institute to pastors around the country. The results of this survey are interesting. It says that:

80% of the pastors in ministry believe the pastoral ministry has affected their families negatively.

33% say being in the ministry is an outright hazard to their family.

75% report a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.

50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.

90% feel they were inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands.

40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.

37% confess being involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in their church.

[Listen to this one.] 70% don't have anyone they consider a close friend. [70%!]

Now they probably have close friends, but because of the image that you build around the ministry, and you do not want to show yourself, or expose the weak spots because people think that you are less than maybe you think you are. There are close friends, but you do not consider them that way.

Now for a minute think of Cain's advantages. Before we get into the way of Cain and what happened to him, think about his advantages. He had quite a spiritual heritage, didn't he? I mean, his parents were molded by God, a direct creation as God formed man. Out of the ground He created him. He breathed life into his father, into Adam and God made a man. And God looked at

Adam and saw that he was good and then He made Eve. And then God spoke directly to Adam. God spoke directly to Cain. With all of these advantages of hearing direct revelation, of being so close to the power of God, and yet, Cain turned to bitterness and hatred.

My point is that we have an incredible spiritual heritage. You know, if we were all to tell our stories and trace the histories of our churches, and where we came from, we would probably all say, “Well, I used to go to Chuck’s church in Costa Mesa. And I used to sit down and listen to the Sunday evening Bible studies, and I would get fed.” I saw a role model and I thought, “I want to teach the Bible.” You know, we can go back to the early days and remember the miracles that have happened and the movement of the Spirit in the communities. But you know, a history of the movement of the Holy Spirit is not enough. What happened in the past is nothing to rest your laurels on. Chuck always taught, “Don’t look back for your spiritual experience.” I love what he said yesterday. He said, “I’m in a place now where the best is yet to come.” I am more excited about ministry than ever before. And it is dangerous if we are always looking back to our history of what has happened, instead of forward to what God is doing now going to do.

Spiritual heritage is not enough. It was not enough for Cain. Cain had such a background and yet he was destroyed because of anger and bitterness that led to murder.

And a well-known name is not enough. Calvary Chapel is a great name to put on the church because when people leave California and they look for a place to fellowship, they will walk into a place that says “Calvary Chapel.” But the name is not enough because what goes on there should produce what goes on here. It may not produce exactly the same fruit as Chuck, but that church better have the teaching of the Word, a love of the sheep, and a quality, healthy fellowship.

Paul wrote to Timothy and said, “Timothy, guard what was committed to your trust” ([1 Timothy 6:20](#)). And in the second letter to Timothy he said, “You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them” ([2 Timothy 3:14](#)). Those were his advantages. Cain had the advantages of being close to the creation of God and yet he went the way of Cain, which simply means the way of thinking or the path that led to his destruction.

So let us look at a couple of verses in Genesis 4, and we will scoot through this thing. Cain took a series of downward steps before he murdered his brother. I do not think it was just out and out rage of the moment, but something had been going on behind the scenes. And first of all, he was self-willed in his service to the Lord.

In the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of the flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.
([Genesis 4:3–5](#))

You know, the first qualification to becoming a good shepherd is to be a good sheep. Cain was called by God to render a certain kind of service unto the Lord. He was called to bring an offering along with his brother. And although he brings an offering, it is an offering after his own accord. It is self-willed service—selfish service. He kind of made it up himself.

Now there is a lot of controversy and talk about these verses, as to what kind of an offering it was. What exactly did Cain offer and why God did not respect Cain’s when He respected Abel’s.

Suffice it to say that both boys, Cain and Abel, were taught well by mom and dad on how to approach God. They had already tried to bring the fruit of the ground to cover themselves. After they sinned, they took fig leaves, sewed them together, you remember. And they covered themselves because they realized that they were naked (cf. [Genesis 3:7](#)). After their sin, they came to the realization, “I don’t have any clothes on. I’ve got to do something about it.” And so they sewed fig leaves together. But, we also read later on that God took the skins of animals and clothed them. And really that paves the highway to the cross that begins in [Genesis 3](#) when God says that the seed of the woman will come and bruise the serpent. And then we see the highway to the cross continue as the skins of animals were taken. An animal has to be killed to provide now for the sins of Adam. It is basically a foreshadowing of atonement.

Both of the Cain and Abel remembered the history of mom and dad. They remembered the sin. They knew the approach to God and yet Cain brings his own approach to God. He brings the fruit of the ground. God looks upon him. And it is not really that fruit versus the animal, it is that Abel came by faith and Cain did not. We read in [Hebrews 11:4](#), “By faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice, whereby it was witnessed that he was righteous before God.”

The relationship that Cain had with God was a surface relationship. He brings service. But it is not from a background of obedience. For we read in [Genesis 4:7](#), “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” God says, “Cain, if you just lived right, if you were righteous, not perfect, you would be accepted, and this sacrifice would be accepted.” God never separates the worship from the worshipper or the sacrifice from the one giving the sacrifice. Cain comes and renders service to the Lord and yet, it is self-styled service. Something he made up along the way. It was hypocrisy. A man who does not practice what he preaches destroys what he builds.

You know, hypocrisy is a real danger for those in the ministry. I think it is easier to lose your first love in the ministry than any place else. You know, it is sort of like a guy who likes working with cars and he tinkers on the little Volkswagen as he grows up. And he thinks, “Man, this is so fun. I just love to take my carburetor apart after I get off work. I hate to put it together, but I love to take it apart. And I would like to do this for a living some day.” So he does it for a living and pretty soon he does not want to do it, he has to do it. He has to crank out those carburetors and rebuild those engines. And soon, he has lost the love and the passion that he once had for working on cars. It is gone.

It is easy to lose your love, that “first love” relationship with the Lord when you work in the ministry. We traffic so much in the truth that sometimes we become immune to it. It is easy to become numb to it. That is one of my constant prayers, “God, don’t just let me crank out a sermon. Don’t let me read the Bible and say, ‘Oh, this is perfect; they need to hear this.’” But let me pray, “Lord, I need that for my life. I want to become personally touched by Your truth so I’m not just cranking out a message because I’m in touch with the truth. I want to be changed by the truth.”

Remember E. M. Bounds? We quote him so often. He said that a man’s ministry is not the production of an hour but it is the outflow of an entire life.

Presently, the church is under attack all over. In New Mexico the big spiritual leader is the archbishop. It is a very Catholic state. The Archbishop has been there for many, many years. He is a respected figure in the community, and in the state. His first cousin is a member of my staff. And the archbishop has been respected, especially for his stands on the sexual issue and homosexuality. And he has come out and made several public acknowledgments of the evil of homosexuality and how men and women ought to keep themselves pure. But just this last month,

he has been indicted for five separate accounts of sexual infidelity—five of them. And now the whole Catholic Church in the state of New Mexico is up in arms because the man that they had looked to, who spoke so much against it, has been involved in this sin himself.

And one of the dangers, like Cain, is to become so close with all of the spiritual advantages and so close to the truth and the movement of God, but not let those truths touch our lives. We are just thinking, “I know that guy in my church will be here next week. I’m really going to get him next week with this message. This is a good one for him. I won’t mention his name but I’ll just sort of look his direction.” We can become immune to the truth instead of becoming shaped by it.

When the ministry becomes a performance rather than something that really comes from the life, we set ourselves up for the next phase that happened to Cain. He started with self-styled service and worship and the next phase was envy and jealousy. It does not say that in our text, but if you turn over to 1 John 3, it is written right there. This is one of the three times that he is mentioned in the New Testament. [1 John 3:10–11](#) says,

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest; Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Now, let’s just stop right there. Isn’t this the message we have heard from the beginning? The one we have heard ever since we have been involved in the Calvary Chapel movement. That has been the ongoing message, actually. Let us love one another. Did you know that it is said that the apostle John, when he was at a very old age, that they would bring him into the congregation and this was his only message? He would lift up his scrawny arm and say, “Little children, love one another.” And he would say that every Lord’s day. Until the people got a little tired of the same message, and one of them said, “John, you keep saying love one another, love one another. Don’t you have another message?” He said, “If this is done, that’s enough. Children, love one another.”

Now, after speaking about that he gives an example of one who does not love, named Cain.

That we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s were righteous. ([1 John 3:11–12](#))

It was envy and jealousy, something that Jon touched on yesterday, that motivated him toward anger. You see, Abel showed up Cain in his relationship with God. Cain was insecure in his own relationship with God, because of self-willed, self-righteous activity and posture before God. Now somebody comes into his life, his brother, who is more righteous, who is spiritual and who shows him up, and envy and jealousy begin.

Envy has been defined in the Bible dictionary as: “A discontent or uneasiness at the sight of another’s good fortune accompanied with a degree of hatred.

You know, Jesus gave a principle to Nicodemus when he was having a conversation. He said,

Nicodemus, everyone who is practicing evil hates the light. And he won't come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. (cf. [John 3:20](#))

You know, there is a principle right there for ministry. When a minister or any person is insecure in his relationship with God, and somebody comes into his life who could be a rival and that other person is righteous and walks with God and loves the Word of the Lord and has leadership capabilities, he can become envious. We can start saying, "Gosh, they're looking up to him now. And they keep saying he's such a tremendous Bible teacher. Every time I leave town and he fills in for me, they like my assistant better than they like me. I'm not going to let him teach anymore. In fact, I think he needs to go out and start his own church. I'll send him out there. Really encourage him to get out there and start his own church." So he does. Across the street from you and that makes it worse.

But in self-styled worship you are not conformed to God's pattern in His Word. When somebody comes into your life who is living righteously and rightly before God, they start showing you up and you can become jealous and envious and discontent because he might be a better counselor or something. You know what I have found? When somebody on my staff is a better counselor than me, I rejoice, because I hate to counsel. And when somebody comes along who is much better than I am—and there are a lot of them who are when it comes to counseling—it is wonderful to say, "Here's a guy who loves doing it. He does it all day long. He happens to be great at it." And one of the secrets is, to cultivate greatness in others, you must push them up. And that stems from having a right relationship with God.

Cain did not have a right relationship with God. He became jealous and jealousy transforms into hatred.

That was Saul's problem. We talked about Saul throwing those spears over at David. And David ducked. But you know, David was put in charge of Saul's army. He was the commander of all of the fighting men. And he went out and behaved himself wisely before Saul and before the army, and the people of Israel respected David. And everything was okay until Saul and David came home from the battle and the women were out in the street singing. And it was the song that they were singing that really bugged Saul. It was the words. He liked the music. The beat was great. But it was the words that really got to him, "Saul has slain his thousands. But David has slain his tens of thousands." And Saul said, "What more can he have except the kingdom? (cf. [1 Samuel 18:6–8](#))

Now let's contrast Saul's attitude to Moses' attitude. Joshua comes into the camp and says, "Moses, Moses, there is a problem over here. Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. Tell them to be quiet." Moses says, "Are you jealous for my sake? I would to God that all of His people could prophesy and He would put His Spirit on all of them. Don't get jealous for me." (cf. [Numbers 11:26–29](#)). See Moses wanted to lift people up. Saul wanted to push people down because David exposed Saul weaknesses. David showed him up and he wanted to get rid of David. Moses wanted to cultivate greatness in the ministry.

And I think that is really the secret to a successful ministry, the fact that you want to cultivate greatness in others. This is possible when you are not intimidated by their qualities. Hey, if they are a great teachers, great. They are only going to enhance your ministry and your staff and your community. They are great counselors? Great! Let the people at them. It is risky to do that; but when you are secure in your walk with God, it will enhance your ministry. And it will enhance that person's life and grow that person up into spiritual capabilities.

I heard of a pastor of a dwindling downtown church. And you know, downtown areas tend to become run down, and people start leaving them and fleeing to the suburbs. And this pastor once had a thriving church. It was the biggest church in town. But he started to notice that Sunday nights were getting a little thinner and thinner. Finally one night just a few people showed up and he said, “Hey, what’s the deal. I’m losing a lot of sheep here.” One of the elders stood up and said, “Well, there’s a guy in the suburbs, a young guy, really teaching the Bible and most of our flock has gone over there.”

“Well, is he a good Bible teacher?”

“Oh, he’s a great Bible teacher.”

“They teach the whole truth?”

“Yeah, nothing but the truth, so help me God.”

“Do they love the Lord?”

“They love the Lord.”

And so the pastor said, “Well, what are we waiting for?” He closed his Bible and said, “Let’s go.” He wasn’t threatened. He wasn’t intimidated. He just saw that God was doing a new work and he wanted to see and be involved in that as well.

Working on that level of being right with God, being close in your relationship with God, and your devotional life, and not just cranking out the messages, will keep you from becoming jealous. But here is the stage—a self-styled service leads to jealousy. You set yourself up for jealousy. You say, “God, I’m going to do Your ministry my way.” And then other people come into your life who have got the true capabilities, the true giftedness, and you become a little bit shaken by them. You see them as your rivals. You want to push them away. And you are doing nothing but hurting yourself, as we will see in a minute.

The next step was anger. We see that now in [Genesis 4:5](#). “He did not respect Cain and his offering and Cain was very angry and his countenance fell.”

You know people who fly into a rage always make a bad landing. And Cain did just that. He was angry with God because God respected his brother’s offering and not his own. And some of history’s greatest men have been ruined by anger and hatred. You know, Alexander the Great truly was great! At thirty years of age, he had conquered all of the known world. He wept in Babylon because there was nothing left to conquer. But he could not control his own spirit—twice he killed friends of his because in a drunken rage they had said something about their emperor. And Alexander angrily threw his spear at them and killed them. He could not control his own spirit. He was ruined by anger, though he could control the world.

Many of God’s men, through jealousy and anger, have also been ruined, as we see here. We all know about anger because we all get criticized. We know about our own anger, don’t we? It is because we have people in the church all the time, who take something that we said in a message the wrong way. They say, “You know, I disagree with that. And I have a word from the Lord for you.”

I had a guy come to me two weeks ago and he said, “I have a word from God just for you. God will not let me leave town until I tell you.” Now, anytime anybody says that I automatically have this defensive posture, because there are a lot of kooks out there.

So I said, “Interesting. All right, fine. What is it?”

So he sat down and said, “I do not want to say this but I am compelled by God to tell you. This is a message from God.”

“Okay, well, what is it?”

“Let My people go.”

“All right. Where are they going to go? What do you mean by that?”

And so he started talking about the church that he had come from and they had the freedom to dance in the Spirit and that I am putting a cap on what the Holy Spirit wants to do. “Let My people go.” I said, “Why didn’t you just come to me and tell me that’s your opinion? Because now you are pretending to be a prophet of God and you are a false prophet.” And you know, I found I had to restrain myself, because when there are kooks like that it makes me angry. It makes me really angry because they are going to feed off of God’s sheep and start ruining them. I can handle it but they are going to get out there to the sheep.

There are times, folks, when anger is justified. In fact, I think that there is something wrong with you if you do not get angry. There is something inhuman about a person who does not get angry. The Bible commands you, “Be angry, but don’t let it lead you to sin” (cf. [Ephesians 4:26](#)). There are certain things that make me angry. When I see what the devil is doing to God’s church, and to God’s ministers, I get angry.

A man walked into my church and said he was the Messiah. You know what made me angry was that he was telling a whole bunch of vulnerable little sheep that he was Jesus. So he comes into my office and he says, “I am the messiah.”

I said, “You’re Jesus?”

“Yep.”

I said, “I’m disappointed. Now can you prove that you’re Jesus?”

He said, “I can. I have the third testament.”

I said, “I have not read that one.”

He said, “Well it’s new. I wrote it.”

“Oh, you wrote it. You authenticated yourself?”

And I just put my arm around him and I said, “There’s the door. Walk through it and never come back. Not until there is really repentance in your heart.” But he was out there telling that lie to all of the sheep. That angers me when I see God’s flock being ripped off. Some anger is justified.

I read an article this week from a new church in Los Angeles. Did you hear of it? It is a feminist church and they worship the twin sister of Jesus, Jesse Mae Christ—because Jesus was a male chauvinist. Of course, she is getting a lot of press and all the women are saying, “Ooh, I like this one.”

When you see God’s flock being ripped off, get angry. Moses, when he saw the people around the golden calf—he got angry in [Exodus 32](#). Jesus, when he saw the money changers in the temple, He did not say, “That saddens Me.” He got a whip and He drove them out (cf. [Matthew 21:12](#)). And I like that passage of Scripture. Jesus had righteous indignation. You can’t read His text without knowing that Jesus became righteously indignant when He saw sheep being ripped off. He said, “You are white washed sepulchers. You are snakes. You are children of the devil.” That is radical.

A few weeks ago we were mentioning a bill that had come up in the state legislature concerning homosexuals. What happened in Colorado that had been overturned, they are now focusing their attention downward in New Mexico. And so they want equal rights as a minority status, like a black person. The bill said if you are an employer, you have to hire a certain amount of

homosexuals. And they were pushing it and pushing it. And so I mentioned something over the pulpit about that to try to give a biblical perspective. And you would not believe the notes I got from people in the church.

One of the notes disturbed me. You know, it is really disturbing, but I am sure that there are a lot of our brothers and sisters in the church who are homosexuals. I looked at that letter and I said, “There is not one in the true church of Jesus Christ that is a practicing homosexual. They might have a struggle with it or they might be a repentant one, but not one that is continually and habitually practicing it.” And my wife saw the things that were going on and she got a little bit angry as well. And you know, when she found out that the bill was in progress, she got on the phone. At my place it is telephone, telegraph, or tell my wife and the message will get out. She told all the representatives and she told all of the lawyers, and she got this whole group of people together in our state who presented it before the legislature and the judiciary committee, and they overturned the bill just this week, in the state of New Mexico. And the homosexuals are trying to pursue it.

So, righteous anger is healthy. It is healthy. And sometimes it is a good motivation, but then there is unrighteous anger. And Cain was one who was angry for the wrong reasons. His motivation was impure. And I just want to fire off three ways where your anger is unjustified.

First of all, when somebody else is blessed and you are not. And that is probably the most common. Either it is a staff member or it is somebody in your church who has had a need met, and your need, you think, is much greater but it has not been met. Or there is a pastor of another church whose church is growing and God is blessing them. They went to Chuck and Chuck gave them the loan. But Chuck turned you down when you asked him for the loan. So there is somebody else is being blessed.

The Scripture says, “Weep with those that weep. Rejoice with those that rejoice” (cf. [Romans 12:15](#)). It is a lot easier to weep with those who weep, isn’t it? If there is a tragedy in the ministry you say, “Oh brother, I’m so sorry. I’ll cry with you any time.” But if somebody says, “I’ve been blessed. God is just pouring out His Spirit. We have no financial need.” Then our reply becomes more muted, “Oh really? Well, praise God.” That reply is because somebody else is blessed.

We always talk about the prodigal son but we never talk about the other prodigal who stayed home ([Luke 15](#)). He was a prodigal son, you know. He was angry when he heard the music and he would not go in. And his father had to come out to him. He was angry that his brother was blessed.

Another form of unjustified anger is when you just do not get your way. You think something ought to be done by God and God does not give you your way and it makes you angry. And you have become not only angry with people, but angry with God. One example would be Jonah—a prophet and a bigot. He was convinced that Nineveh should fry—convinced that this arch enemy of the Jewish nation should be destroyed. And when God, in His grace and in His mercy, decided not to pour judgment on them, Jonah got ticked off. He did not get his way. He said, “You know that’s an unrighteous nation. God, they ought to pay for it.” But God saw that they turned and it says, “God relented from His anger” (cf. [Jonah 3:10](#)). And Jonah went to God and said, “I knew it! I knew that You were a righteous, graceful, loving God. And I’m angry because of it.” And God comes to Jonah and asks him, “Jonah, is this right for you to be angry?” Jonah doesn’t answer him. He sits outside the city, arms folded and looks over the city (cf. [Jonah 4](#)). Maybe God will just wipe these characters out.

In His grace and His love, once again God causes a plant, a gourd plant to grow up over Jonah, to give him protection in this angry state. In this sinful state God is blessing him. The next day, after it is grown up and Jonah is saying, “Oh this is a great place to live, under the shade of this gourd,” God creates a worm. The worm chews at the root. The gourd is withered. The East wind comes and blows and beats on Jonah and he becomes angry. And God says, “Jonah is it right for you to become angry?” Remember Jonah’s response? “It is right even unto death for me to become angry” (cf. [Jonah 4:9](#)). Jonah harbored animosity toward someone that God loved. He played God, wanting to judge those that God wanted to bless.

There was a pastor in Ireland who told this story to a group of Protestants, about a young two-year-old named Paul McGowen. This little boy loved to go to the park with his mommy every day and play in the park and see the birds. He would go to the park and see the birds flying around. He would say, “Birdie! Birdie!” One day on his way to the park—this was in Belfast—a terrorist bomb blew up and hurled little Paul across the street. He sustained head injuries. He was unconscious and taken to Belfast Children’s Hospital. They operated on him. For sixteen days he was in a coma. When he woke up, he could not see. The pastor is telling the Protestant congregation this story. After several weeks, when little Paul woke up blinded, the nurse was holding him by the window and all of a sudden little Paul says, “Birdies! Birdies!” He could see the little birdies. Finally he could see. Finally this miracle happened where he could see. They had been praying for him. Everybody in the audience rejoiced. But there was one woman who said, “But he was Roman Catholic, wasn’t he?”

You know, animosity toward other groups that are not of us or like us runs deep. God cannot bless them. They are not us! God is only allowed to pour out His grace upon us. I want my way. Why are You blessing them? They don’t even believe like we do.

A third way is when we react without responding. We react because we do not know all the facts. We have not researched all the facts. We react to a situation instead of gracefully responding. Moses is an example. Moses became angry when the Israelites wanted water to drink (cf. [Numbers 20](#)). And you know the story. Moses hit the rock, beat the rock, and he misrepresented God. He was not allowed to go into the Promised Land because of it. He misrepresented God as a God of anger rather than as a God of grace and love and forgiveness. He did not know all the facts. He reacted rather than responded.

In [Ecclesiastes 7:8–9](#), Solomon tells us these words of wisdom:

The end of a thing is better than its beginning;
The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Do not hasten in your
spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

James says, “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (cf. [James 1:19](#).)” You should respond rather than react.

What happens when anger develops for any of these reasons, in the life of a minister? What often happens is that person begins to take it out on people like his wife, his children, his staff, and his church. And one of the worst things is when the pulpit becomes something to scold people and to chew them out rather than to feed them. This is a holy office to stand behind the pulpit and proclaim the Word of God. And there are pastors who, because they have been hurt and they have been burned, they react in anger towards somebody in the congregation. They use it to chew them out and rebuke them. There is a big difference between pouring out your heart and getting something off your chest—it needs to be done in love.

What happens when a person is caught up in this kind of activity is he becomes like Elijah—the Elijah complex. He becomes isolated. He isolates himself because of anger and pretty soon he thinks, “Well, you know, I’m the only one who is righteous anyway. I’m the only one giving the real truth. There is no one like me around.” And the problem with that, guys, is that it ruins us. Oh, it hurts them. It does. It hurts the flock of God, but it hurts the minister of God. It is like a rattle snake who, when he is really intimidated and he is really scared, he bites himself.

You know how an Eskimo kills a wolf? He takes a knife, coats it with a thin coat of blood and sticks it up in the snow with the blade sticking up. And the wolf comes by and he smells blood and he starts licking the blade. And as he licks the blade, because it is so cold, as he is cutting his tongue and sheering his tongue, he is numb to it because that blade is ice cold. And pretty soon, he kills himself as he swallows his own blood.

Anger does that. Anger destroys and debilitates the ministry of the person. They become totally ineffective. He does not see people as God sees them, through the loving, gracious eyes of a God who wants to love and forgive, but says, “I’m going to be right—dead right.” And it is debilitating.

Now notice what God does in [Genesis 4:10–12](#). After Cain kills his brother, God said,

What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.

It has been said that a person who thinks by the inch, talks by the yard, deserves to be dealt with by the foot. And God deals with them. He kicks them out of the garden. Notice what He said in [Genesis 4:13](#). Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.” Isn’t that sad that he did not say, “My sin is greater than I can bear? I’m sorry. I confess it. I agree with You that it was wrong, Lord. I repent.” But he is concerned about the consequence. You see his heart had become so hard.

My punishment is greater than I can bear. Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me. ([Genesis 4:13–14](#))

Now let’s look back at [verse 7](#) and we will close with this verse. Because I want to give you a few safeguards as we close this message. In [verse 7](#), God says, Cain, if you do well, if you live right, if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well—notice this—sin lies at the door. Its desire is for you. But you should rule over it. In Hebrews it speaks of an animal crouching at the door, waiting so that as soon as you open the door it is going to come in and pounce on you.

Sin is crouching at the door, gang. It wants to master you. But you must master it. That is always the case, guys. Sin is crouching at the door, in terms of unbelief, sexual immorality, greed, anger, or whatever that door of vulnerability, whatever our Achilles’ heel happens to be. Sin is crouching

at the door. A person who refuses to be mastered by God and by the love of God, opens himself to be mastered by anything else. And ministries can be driven in those forces.

A couple safeguards: first, do not prolong the conflict if there is one. Do not prolong it. We all have them. There are people out there who love roast preacher for lunch every Sunday. And they will talk about you to everybody else in the congregation. And if you know there is a problem do not prolong it—resolve it. Sometimes the best way to resolve it is to go to a person. Sometimes it is just to leave it alone. But get it over quickly.

“Be angry and sin not. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath” (cf. [Ephesians 4:26](#)). Listen to the New English Bible, how it puts it:

If you are angry do not let your sin, or your anger lead you into
sin. Do not let the sunset find you still nursing it.

You sit in bed at night and it goes over and over and you are planning the course now of what exactly you are going to say in the sermon to the guy in the third row. Don't nurse it.

Secondly, overlook offenses. There is petty stuff. Don't worry about it. Those unsigned letters, throw them out. Don't even read them. Find out if it is signed—if it is not signed don't even read it. Throw it away. If somebody says something stupid, overlook it. Don't look at the black dot on the white sheet all the time. There are enough people who love you, who are grateful that you are their shepherd. All of the little conflicts do not really matter. It is just petty stuff.

And we have that beautiful proverb, [Proverbs 19:11](#), “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression.”

Thirdly, watch your tongue. The tongue of a minister is sharpened because of exercise. We use it all the time and we become good at slicing people up. We can take the sword of the Spirit out and just level a person. Watch your tongue. “A soft answer turns away wrath” ([Proverbs 15:1](#)).

Somebody says, “Let My people go!” You know what I should have said? I should have said, “Well, would you pray for me?” And then I should have walked away. “Pray for me.” A soft answer turns away wrath. Harsh words stir up anger.

Fourthly and finally, be honest. If you feel something about a person don't butter them up with flattery. If there is something going on between you and a staff member or you and another pastor, be honest. Tell him what you think. The Scripture says in [Proverbs 27:5–6](#), “Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

It has helped my ministry a lot when somebody that I know and respect has come along side me and told me certain things that they see. Or when I have gone and just opened myself up to a person and then it is done. Be honest with a person. There are a lot of pastors, I think, that are afraid of honesty. We have this image of what we think people think of when they see us. We don't want to shatter that image. After all, we are the pastors. We do not get tempted, right? We do not have problems that the common people have. You know, I think it is important to let people see the cracks. Let them know that you are human. Be honest with them.

Paul Smith, several years ago, handed me a book by Juan Carlos Ortiz. He said I ought to read it. And I read it and it is really a great practical book on loving your neighbor as yourself. And Juan Carlos Ortiz is a pastor down in Argentina. He tells of a story of a pastor who hated his guts and

how he handled the situation. There was an animosity between he and another brother. Ortiz says, “There was a young man in my former denomination who became my enemy some time ago. He said that I was not being faithful to the church. Eventually he started to hate me. During one of the conventions I went to him and said,

‘Hello. How are you?’ and I gave him a big hug.

‘Don’t hug me’, he growled.

‘Well, I love you’, I replied.

‘You cannot love me because I am your enemy’. [He was almost shouting at this point].

‘Praise the Lord’, I said. ‘I didn’t know you were my enemy, but here is an opportunity for me to love my enemies. Thank You, Jesus, for my precious enemy.’”

He concluded by saying, “You know something. One year later I was preaching in his church.” Pastor Ortiz just would not let anger dominate him. He would not let jealousy dominate him. He had rumors going around about him all over the place in Argentina. He just said, “Forget it.” Forgive them. A soft answer turns away wrath.

Heavenly Father, we feel like we are being so fed by the practical exhortations of the men so far. We are privileged, Lord, to handle the word of truth. We do not take it lightly. And even though it would be great, Lord, like we do every year in June to speak about the common salvation, we felt it very necessary to exhort the brethren. Lord, You love Your church. You love Your ministry. And we remember right now that it is not our ministry to begin with. It is Yours. You just graciously let us be stewards, co-laborers with Christ. I pray, Lord, that we would never hold onto anything so tightly and possess something that does not belong to us anyway. That we would be faithful stewards, faithful men, and men filled with truth and that we would speak the truth in love. Help us, Lord, to never let our pulpit become platforms for getting even, or scolding the sheep, or yelling at people who have harmed us. Lord, help us to deal and to resolve issues of anger, sinful anger. Help us, Lord, to get angry at the right things. And to be very tender hearted toward Your sheep. Lord Jesus, You did not say, “If you love Me beat My sheep.” But You said, “If you love Me feed My sheep.” And that is what we want to do. In Jesus’ name. Amen.