**The Book Of Proverbs – What Proverbs Says About Compassion And Anger**

As we enter our second week of study in **Proverbs**, we want to quickly look at another positive emotion and then see what **Proverbs** says about a couple of negative ones that we need to be aware of and how to guard against them taking over our life.

Again, as we said two weeks ago, emotions are not bad in themselves. Emotions were given to us by God. Jesus had emotions; they were kept under control because He was the God-Man. But He was moved with compassion (our positive word this morning) as seen in **Mt. 15:32**. He was grieved and angered, righteously, over how the religious leaders kept the people from the truth of God **(Mk. 3:5)**.

We began our series by discussing the need for wisdom, which begins with having respect and awe for God. Then we talked about the emotion of joy that is noted in Proverbs. Today we are going to quickly look first, as mentioned, at a positive emotion, and then a couple of ones that people do struggle with and we will see what Proverbs tells us about those and how to manage them.

But on to the positive one. **Compassion, pity (meaning care and concern for others)** is an emotion. It is a decision, yes, just as love is, but there is an emotional side to it when we are moved with compassion for others, such as our children, people we encounter, family, friends, etc.

We are talking about being moved emotionally out of love and pity for someone. It is seen in a desire to help others. So how do we learn to “enjoy” the emotion of compassion or pity. Let’s find out.

**1) When we are not hiding sins, it helps us to be compassionate.** It also helps our emotional state. Just read what David wrote in the Psalms about how when he hid his sin or tried to **(Ps. 32:3-4)**, it made him physically ill, and no doubt affected him emotionally and spiritually.

Look with me please at **Pro. 28:13**. This verse tells us that whoever tries to hide, conceal, or cover their sins will not prosper. Life will be difficult, because if you know the Lord, trying to hide sins gets us nowhere. There are people who will, humanly speaking, seem to prosper in their sins but God is the ultimate judge of life. What may seem as someone doing well now, without Christ in their life, the future is dim for them.

The person, this verse says, who does two things: **(1)** “**confesses” (to cast by the extended hand)** and **(2)** **“forsakes” (abandons, leaves)** sin will experience God’s mercy, which we as Christ followers get to have in our life every day. God is merciful, gracious, and kind. Think of compassion and care when we read the word **“mercy”** here in **Pro. 28:13**.

When we understand God’s mercy, His constant care for us even when do not deserve it, we can in turn, show mercy and compassion to others. We see and are emotionally moved by others who need help or encouragement. We better understand compassion when we have experienced ourselves from God.

**2) We must tune in to the needs of others to experience the emotion of compassion.** Look with me at **Pro. 28:27**. In this verse Solomon tells us that whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing. This is not a promise of financial riches, it is a promise that God will take care of us because we chose to help others.

But note the second part of the verse. The person who **“hides” (turn away from anyone, implying neglect)** their eyes, who ignores the needs of others, no matter if they are struggling with an issue in their life, or going through a difficult time (loss of a loved one, a health issue, etc.), if we hide our eyes and ignore them, God will not be pleased and we will not experience peace, rest and God’s blessings.

The **Life Application Bible Notes** makes the following statement which I think is worth noting,

**“The second part of this proverb could be restated positively: “Those who open their eyes to poor people will be blessed.”**

A third and final thought on compassion before we move on to a couple of negative emotions that people struggle with and what Proverbs says on how we can handle them is this,

**3) When moved emotionally by mercy, we do see and help the less fortunate.** Look at **Pro. 19:17**. Probably many of us have been “taken.” Someone claims to have a need, you give to them only to find out that what they said they needed money for they really did not. We do not always know the situation, so some people see a need (someone asking for financial help) and feel they need to do something. When ripped off, it is hard to be compassionate.

**Pro. 19:17**, though, reminds us that there are people with genuine needs. Solomon tells us that whoever is generous, who does see real needs, and gives to those who fit that category, is literally lending to the Lord and God will take care of us. This we have previously noted.

This can mean more than just financial needs. The word **“poor” can mean “weak, thin, low.”** It can describe, as we have noted earlier, someone going through tough times. Though the main meaning is that of those who are struggling financially to make ends meet, it can go much further than that. Look for opportunities to help others, to be moved by their struggles, to help.

There are people around us who need a word of encouragement, a helping hand, a friend. That is compassion in action. Let me share a short story that helps us see this up close **(Use story from message from October 30, 2011, Making Our Emotions Work)**.

With that and seeing that God does indeed want us to have positive emotions, let us move on to a couple of negative ones. These are real and can emotionally drag us down and ruin us spiritually. They are well-known and we need to make sure that we are handling them properly. We are looking at just two and then we wrap this part of our study in Proverbs up.

**The first negative emotion is “anger.”** Now remember that there is a righteous anger, to use those words. Jesus was rightly angry in **Mk. 3**. It was not sinful anger. His anger, as we have noted, was connected to grief over the fact that the religious leaders ignored and despised what He was doing for the people and they continually led people away from God, not towards Him.

Righteous anger is acceptable when innocent children are abused, individuals destroy other people by lies and deceit, and people, including kids, are hurt for no reason. This type of anger always leads to a constructive response. What we see in Proverbs is the destructive side of anger. And as we do so, let us note the remedy to the situation. Here is what we know about anger.

**1) Anger usually has a root cause.** It can start with bitterness, where we become frustrated at someone or a situation and before we know it, if not put in check, bitterness leads to anger. **Eph. 4:31** tells us that. There is a progression of anger that begins with bitterness and ends up wanting to see another person fail by losing their job, getting a flat tire, etc. It is called “malicious” where we want the worst for someone.

Proverbs tells us that anger usually has a root to it. **One** of those root causes we are going to look at after we spend a little on anger. It is found in **Pro. 14:29-30**. In **vs. 29** we are told that the person who is slow to anger has **“great understanding” (insight, intelligence, reason)**. It is also connected to having discernment, good judgment and having a grasp on something.

**Note:** This person knows what happens when anger gets rolling and they know how destructive it can be and do not want to go down that road. Being slow to anger is being patient no matter the situation.

God is the One Who helps us to be patient, to be slow to anger. **Vs. 29** also reminds us that the one who is **“hasty” (short, impatient)** with their temper, having a short fuse, will be known to others because of their rash actions and response to situations, seen in the word **“exalts”** in this verse.

**Vs. 30** gives us one of the root causes for anger. First, thought, it notes that a healthy person emotionally and spiritually **(see the word “tranquil”)** is at peace of mind and does not suffer from some of the physical pain that wrong emotions can cause.

But the root cause in **vs. 30** is **“envy.”** The NET explains the word **“envy”** in the following way **(Have this on the screen)**,

**“The term...refers to passionate zeal or “jealousy”...depending on whether the object is out of bounds or within one’s rights. In the good sense one might be consumed with zeal to defend the institutions of the sanctuary. But as envy or jealousy the word describes an intense and sometimes violent excitement and desire that is never satisfied.”**

**Point:** We will talk about jealousy and envy after we deal with anger this morning. Think of other root causes of anger - insecurity, pride (we want our way), self-absorption (the world revolves around us), fear, hopelessness, failure on our part and the failure of others. The list could go on.

These can be triggers to us getting angry. Keep that in mind as we talk about the remedy to anger shortly. But there is another thing or two to note about anger,

**2) Anger clouds our decision making and we can look foolish.** Let me share a couple of verses from Proverbs that point this out. The first is **Pro. 14:17**. An impatient, quick-tempered individual, because they are not thinking rationally, but responding rashly, can act foolishly.

And others do see it and are affected by it. We have all met the person who “flies-off-the-handle.” They are tough to be around and in fact, we never really know how we should act or what to say or do because they are so touchy.

These people, controlled by their anger, make bad decisions. It could be a wrong decision at work, or a financial decision that went sour, because we were mad about something and did not stop to consider the consequences of our actions. The person who does things out of anger, once said or done, even if they later regret it, and even ask forgiveness, cannot undo what they allowed to happen.

One other verse before we move on to a third thought on anger and then see what Proverbs gives us a remedy. Note **Pro. 19:19**. This verse tells us that a person with a temper gets themselves into trouble and has to pay for it **(BKC)**. People want nothing to do with them, or they may lose a job, friendship, etc.

This verse also tells us that the person who helps this type of individual or rescues them from the consequences of the person blowing up, will have to do it again because the person with the anger issue has not dealt with it. They do not learn; they just keep doing the same thing.

**3) A hot-headed individual is considered foolish because they are out of control.** Each of these thoughts on anger builds on the previous. **Pro. 15:18** tells us that a hot-tempered individual **“stirs up strife.”** They cause arguments **(Pro. 30:33)**. They push buttons to get into arguments. They have no self-control and that comes out when they are dealing with things.

The word **“hot-tempered” can also be translated as “burning anger, rage.”** A hothead causes “dissension” as the **NET** notes. This person engages in causing problems because they are not even attempting to deal with the issue at the heart of their problem. People like this bring tension into a room. You never know what they will say or do that will cause issues with people.

So, quickly, how do we deal with anger according to Proverbs.

**1) Be aware of our “match” points.** Note with me **Pro. 19:11**. “Good sense” makes one slow to anger this verse says. The word translated as **“good sense” means that we have “understanding, insight, intelligence, wisdom, discretion.”** We know what anger does and we are slow to allow it to take root. In fact, we stop it from taking charge in our life because we are aware of the destructive nature of sinful anger. The Bible is clear about what anger is and what it does to us.

Notice the responsibility we have to deal with anger. It is on us when it comes to our response to situations. God holds us accountable for how we react, and He will hold others accountable for what they say and do. We must first deal with ourselves.

Included in this verse is the word **“makes”** which means **“to be long,”** and we see patience in play here. We **“delay, defer, and are patient.”** We forgive offenses instead of reacting to them. The word **“overlook” has the idea of “forgiving.”**

**Point:** We need to be wise, to know the results of anger, to forgive those who have done something to us. We need to know what “sets us off” and choose to not respond. Take steps, have a plan. It may mean leaving the situation to think, counting to ten, remembering the negative effects of anger. It is like the check engine light in our car that lets us know something is out of kilter. We need to know our “match” points and have a plan to deal with them. That plan must be grounded in Scripture **(see Eph. 4:32)**.

**2) Think before responding.** Look with me at **Pro. 12:16**. The **NET** tells us that a fool’s annoyance is known as once. The person without self-control, who allows anger, for example, to direct their life, is known to everyone. People see their response.

In fact, the word in the **ESV, “vexation,” can mean “anger.”** It can also mean **“grief.”** The picture here is seen in both **vss. 15-16**. A fool thinks that they are always right and are closed to advice. A wise person listens and learns. That is seen in **vs. 15**.

In **vs. 16** we see that it is foolishness to get angry and show it to everyone, and to be mad and out of control. The second part of **vs. 16** is important in our discussion. The **“prudent” or “sensible, cautious”** person **“ignores”** an insult. This does not mean that they never say anything or respond, but they do so sensibly. They use wisdom, they think things through. They do not act, as the **NET** puts it, **“instinctively or irrationally.”**

**Point:** And something may be going on in the life of the person who is angry. That does not excuse their behavior but by our not responding in anger, and maybe we are caught in their line of fire, and they have something bothering them that is worth listening to, we show wisdom by not acting like them.