

# OpenTheo

## Proverbs: Matters of Heart (Part 4)



### Proverbs - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the importance of managing one's heart, mind, and emotions. He emphasizes the need for discretion, slow anger, and the ability to overlook offenses in maintaining healthy relationships with others. Gregg argues that while emotions are not self-validating, they should still be examined and controlled in order to avoid irrational reactions. Ultimately, he encourages listeners to trust in God to handle even the smallest things in life.

### Transcript

We have been looking at themes related to the inward life, the management of the soul, of the heart, the mind. A lot of the issues that are in this category are the kinds of things that have been taken over in modern times by the mental health professions. As if people are sick.

When in fact, the Bible indicates that a lot of these things are really matters of a condition of the heart, which is our responsibility to manage. The heart is not, we're not born with our heart in a certain inclination that can never change. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but it can be removed, it can be changed, it can be molded.

So also a heart that's right can backslide. The backslider in heart is mentioned. The heart is not static, the heart is not just predetermined.

It is true that people are born with foolishness bound up in their hearts, as Solomon says here, but at the same time, that is our responsibility to manage and make sure that, well, the parents have to manage the heart of the child. The rod drives the foolishness from him, Solomon says, but once you're adult and responsible, then you have to take charge and guard your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life, he says. Now, we were talking about some specific issues of the heart that are addressed in Proverbs.

We've talked for the whole session talking about depression. Last time we were talking about envy and jealousy and resentment. In our notes now, we're going to be looking at the remainder, I hope, of these matters under this category, which would be anger and

self-composure.

Actually, self-confidence is kind of in a category by itself, but let's talk about anger. Anger is something that almost everybody has a bit of. Some have a bit too much.

They give too much vent to their anger and cause problems. Now, one of the problems is, of course, that your soul is poisoned by inappropriate anger. But another thing, of course, is that relationships are destroyed by anger, and relationships are what God really values.

And we'll see that after we've done with these categories, we move into the subject of human relationships, and that's where Proverbs has the very most to say about that category. That's because the Bible has more to say about that category than anything else. In the Ten Commandments, six of them have to do with your relationships with people.

And the teaching of Jesus indicated that the great commandment, the new commandment, is that we love one another as he has loved us. That's about relationship. Relationship is everything to God.

In fact, Jesus said that all the law and all the prophets can be summarized in two commands. Both of them have to do with relationships. One is love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and that's your relationship with God.

Then the other is love your neighbors who love yourself. So, there really isn't much of anything other than relationship. God places value on relationship, and there's many things that he has to say about the need to make sure that you are relating in a loving way to people and to God.

And anger not only poisons your own soul, but it also, of course, damages relationships. And that is a major issue, because I don't suppose there's anybody on the planet who never gets angry. But there are some who have shorter fuses than others.

There are some who are thinner skinned than others. There are some that are more easily offended than others. There are some who don't rule their spirit so much as others.

And that's the issues that Solomon is going to point out to us. The first of the verses I want to look at is Proverbs 14 and verse 29. It says, He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.

Now, being slow to wrath, it doesn't mean the person never gets angry. Even God gets angry. However, it is said of God in Psalm 103 that he is slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy.

When people say, well, why is it that the Old Testament God is such a wrath-filled God and the God of the New Testament seems so indulgent? Well, that's not exactly how it is. I'm amazed how many people actually read the Bible and see that as being the case. That God in the Old Testament is full of wrath.

He's not full of wrath. He's actually slow to wrath. In the record of 4,000 years of history, covering about five or six empires rising and falling, we do see occasions where God eventually has to judge.

His wrath lashes out. But we never find a case where God's wrath lashes out against a nation until he's given them hundreds, if not thousands of years to get it right. And they keep rebelling and rebelling and rebelling.

The Bible says he's slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy. Therefore, being slow to wrath is to being, in one sense, God-like. Now, Paul said in Ephesians 5, he said, be imitators of God as little children.

So whatever God is like, whatever his character is like, is what we're supposed to be imitating, even as children imitate their parents. God is our Father and we are to become like him. So if he is slow to wrath, then the person who is slow to wrath has great understanding.

Now, one thing is true, that a person who gets quickly angry is not taking much time to understand, very often. Now, if you do understand, you may eventually get angry because things that are correctly understood sometimes rightly inspire anger. And Paul said in Ephesians 4, be angry, but do not sin.

There is an anger that is not sin. Anger is not a sin in itself. Even though we're told to put away wrath and put away anger, and we're told to be careful not to sin in our anger.

But it says be angry. There are times when if you aren't angry, you're not alive. If some things don't infuriate you, then you don't have any switches in you.

You're non-responsive to things. God himself gets angry slowly. He doesn't get angry quickly.

And godly people should have, there should be things that make you angry. There were things that made Jesus angry. That wasn't a sin.

Jesus never sinned. So, anger is not itself a sin. It is an appropriate emotional reaction to certain stimuli that legitimately should make people angry because they make God angry.

But the question then is, what does one do? How quickly does someone allow their anger to arise? If someone gets angry quickly, it means they're not thinking things through.

They're just viscerally responding to an irritant. Something that annoys them.

And so, they're kind of under the control of the circumstances, their mood, their emotion. They're not governing themselves by their understanding, but by the emotion of it. Certainly, anger is an emotion that is at times legitimate, at times not legitimate.

Sometimes we get angry and then we later learn more about the situation and say, It wasn't what I thought. I shouldn't have gotten angry like that. Because we acted in emotion, the emotion of anger, rather than in our understanding.

Sometimes people suggest to me that I'm unemotional or that I don't think the emotions are important. That's not true at all. I personally think that I have the full range of emotions that anyone has and that I think they're very important, but not as important as some people think they are.

I consider emotions to be, of all the aspects of personality, the most shallowest and the most changeable. The most transient. And therefore, the least significant.

Not unimportant, but less important than other things more important, like thinking, choosing, reaching convictions. You know, your emotions can change four times in an hour. Your convictions won't change that quickly.

You may change your convictions, but more slowly and you won't switch them back and forth as often. Emotions come and go. They're shallow.

They're transient. They are called forth by external circumstances in many cases. They are unbidden.

You don't choose your emotions in most cases. At least not initially. Now, you may get angry by some stimulus that legitimately irritates.

And then, of course, the question is, do you remain angry? Do you let the sun go down on your wrath? Paul said, don't be angry, but don't sin. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath. And there is a sense in which the emotion of anger comes and you are responsible to do something.

You're responsible to govern it. But by what faculty? By your convictions. By your faith in God.

By your reasonableness. By your understanding. So, the Bible talks about emotions.

And anger is almost a universal emotion. I shouldn't even say almost. It is universal.

But the governing of your emotions by your reason, by your understanding, is what Solomon assumes is possible and necessary. Many people just assume that because they feel a certain way, that their feelings are self-validating. Of course I'm going to feel this

way.

They did this to me. How can I not feel this way? Isn't that normal? Well, it might be normal for a fallen man to be touchy and thin-skinned and slow to forgive, quick to wrath. Remember what James said? He said, therefore, brethren, be slow to speak, slow to wrath.

He said, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. It's James 1.19. Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Sometimes we get angry. We feel like we're righteously indignant. And we act in our emotion.

And we think we're doing the righteous thing. And like Jesus said, there will come a time when men will kill you and think they're doing God a service. Some people get angry at you and kill you.

And they think they're doing a righteous thing. But the wrath of man is not serving the purpose of the righteousness of God. And so James says we need to be swift to hear, slow to speak.

That is, slow to respond when we're being impulsive, making an impulsive reaction, and slow to wrath. Now, being swift to hear is to be understanding. The person who is slow to wrath is of great understanding.

There are times when people do things that will make you angry, which once you understand a little better where they're coming from, you're not as prone to be angry. You're more prone to be gracious. Because you understand something more about them.

This is really true in marriage. You know, every marriage is cross-cultural. You know that? I mean, I heard a YWAMer in Honolulu, a Japanese-American guy, he was talking about marriages he's seen take place in YWAM because YWAM is an international organization.

There's a lot of cross-cultural marriages that happen in YWAM. And he said he really didn't feel very positive about them. He said he hadn't really seen cross-cultural marriages working out very well.

And I can see what he means. You know, different cultures have different assumptions and misunderstandings of each other and all that. And people can get angry because someone did something that was, to their mind, culturally normal, and the other person thought it was weird or cruel or something else, something bad.

But as I thought about it, I thought, well, I don't know that there's ever been a marriage

that wasn't cross-cultural. Not in modern times. Because unless you're living in a small town where everyone is exactly culturally homogenous and you married someone that you grew up with and their family is the same as your family and everything, but virtually every family has its own culture and people grow up with certain assumptions about what they should do and what is valuable and what's right and wrong.

And then they marry somebody who's got a different background and different assumptions and so forth. And they marry each other and they, even though they're good people and they're not doing the wrong thing, they're doing what's misunderstood by the other person and not appreciated their motives and it's an irritant. And obviously, somebody who reacts quickly in anger is going to just be offended, is going to be annoyed, is going to, they're going to have conflict.

Whereas a person who's slow to speak and quick to hear and speaks with a great understanding, before reacting in emotion, that person has got to sit back and say, now why is that person trying to be annoying to me? Probably not. Well then what is it that makes them do what they're doing? Or say what they're saying? Or do things the way they do them? That annoys me. Why are they doing that if they're not trying to annoy me? Well, you can try to understand that.

And say, well that's probably something to do with how they were raised differently. They have different sets of assumptions about relationships, about behavior and so forth. Now that doesn't mean that everyone's behavior is equally valid.

I mean, it doesn't mean that every culture is equally legitimate. Some cultures are really unenlightened. There is a lot of rudeness in some cultures I've been in.

Frankly, some of the Asian countries I've been in. I haven't been to China, but some friends of mine have been to China. And they say when you get in a line there, there isn't a line.

You just have to push your way in. And if you're not aggressive and rude, everyone will get in ahead of you. No one will wait for you.

Everyone will try to push in ahead of you. And it's just the way they, I mean, they don't think of that as rude because that's just what they've always done. That's never occurred to them.

But we're raised in a culture that's been shot through with Christian influence for centuries. And there's, even among the non-believers, there's a sense of fair play. There's a sense of deferring to somebody else.

And, you know, if you marry somebody from a culture who doesn't have the same sense of consideration and so forth built into them, then there's going to be a lot of irritation. And frankly, even two people who grew up in the same town might be so different in that

respect. That a person, in order to avoid getting angry quickly, has got to first try to understand.

And a person who's slow to react is one who has great understanding. But he was impulsive. That's someone who acts immediately on the impulse of the emotion of the irritant or whatever.

That impulsive action is going to bring about foolish responses. That's what folly is. Foolish response.

You're going to act foolishly and have something to regret about it later. So, in other words, he's advocating being slow to wrath, like God is slow to wrath. Like James says to be slow to wrath.

But both James and Solomon agree that being slow to wrath is related to being quick to hear and understand what the other person's, where they're coming from. And to not just assume that your emotions, which come whether they're right or wrong, you can't just assume your emotions are legitimate. You can't assume that you are rightfully angry and that they have deliberately done something bad.

So, the more you can understand the other person, the more you make it your commitment to understand the other person, the less likely you are to end up getting angry. Because if you're slow to wrath rather than quick to wrath, it may be that by the time you would have gotten mad, you don't have to anymore. In other words, being slow to wrath might mean that you never get mad in that situation at all.

You might get angry after you've thought it through, after you realize there's a reason to be angry. Once you've figured it out, it may be that you'll be angry, but you're slow to get there. But if you're slow enough getting there, it may be that you'll never get there because you'll talk to her and say, Well, nah, it's not that big a deal.

And then it kind of just fizzles out and there's never any explosion of anger there. So, just being slow to anger. Now, what does slow to anger mean? It means ruling your spirit.

Look what he says in Proverbs 16, 32. We have this slow to anger again. And it's in the poetic parallelism of the passage.

It's equated with ruling your spirit. Says, he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he who rules his spirit than he who takes the city.

Now, the mighty is the same one that takes the city. The one who is slow to anger is the same one who's ruling his spirit. This is the parallelism of the poetry.

They're saying the same thing twice. But you see, Solomon considers that ruling your

spirit is the same thing as being slow to anger. Now, he says the person who's got that mastered has accomplished something more difficult, more heroic, more admirable than the man who can master other people and conquer them.

You can conquer a city full of people, but if you can't conquer yourself, you've done very little. Anyone with big enough muscles or big enough guns can conquer people who have smaller muscles or smaller guns. But Alexander the Great conquered the whole world within 12 years from the time he began till the time he committed suicide or died drunk.

People have different ideas how he died. Some say he died of syphilis. But the point is, one thing is very clear.

He was able to conquer cities and countries and nations and the whole Persian Empire, but he was not able to govern himself. He died at age 33, as I recall, because he drank too much. He had too much sex.

He apparently did have syphilis. Some say he drank himself to death because he was despondent, that there were no more worlds to conquer and so forth. Whatever it was, he was not the man in terms of self-control, of ruling his spirit as he appeared to be on the battlefield.

And of course, it's a greater thing to master yourself than to master somebody else, because all it takes to master someone else is to be bigger or stronger than them. But you can't be bigger or stronger than yourself. How do you defeat yourself? It's an even match.

It's you against you. And therefore, the person who can say, my better self, my better judgment, my better choices are going to master that other part of me that's equally me. And to do that successfully is quite an accomplishment.

You see, there are two yous in a sense. Paul said, I have in my mind one set of convictions. I agree with my mind that the law is good.

But there's this other law in my members that seems to keep working against that. And sometimes it defeats me. I've got my good sense, my Christian convictions.

And I've got this other natural set of tendencies that I was born with that keep asserting themselves. And there's this warfare, the flesh less against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh. And these two are contrary to one another so that you cannot do what you want to do.

Paul says in Galatians 5 17. And so it's you against you. Because your flesh is you, but your spirit is also you.

And so how do you master yourself? Well, better figure it out. Of course, Paul says you



do it by walking in the spirit. He says, walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

In Solomon's day, walking in the spirit was not an option. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified, it says in John 7:39. So Solomon, though he was given wisdom, he was not given the same resources spiritually that we are given.

And if we walk in the spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But in the old days, before the spirit was given, it was just a matter of toughing it out and saying, OK, I'm inclined to get angry. But what can I bring against this? I have to rule my spirit.

By what? By my convictions. But by my awareness of what really should be done rather than what I feel like doing. Getting angry is what I feel like.

That's my emotions. But there's something more important than my emotions. My emotions are not self-validating.

Just because they're there doesn't mean they're OK. They might be OK, but that's what I have to figure out. I have to use something else, some other faculty of mine to discern whether this emotion should be given vent or not given vent.

There's something besides my emotions that has to rule me. I have to rule my own spirit. And that is my ultimate life decision, my values, my convictions.

I've got to stand by what I know to be right against the protestations of my own emotions many times. And the man who can rule his spirit, the man who is slow to anger, he is slow to anger because he's determined not to get angry quickly. And he's ruling himself.

He's governing himself. That person is to be more admired than a person who's a great military conqueror, says Solomon. Now, on this same thing, if you turn to chapter 19 and verse 11.

19:11 of Proverbs, it says, The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression that is one against himself. Committed by another. Normally, the reason you get angry is because you feel that somebody has transgressed against you.

Somebody has wronged you. A transgression is someone doing to you what you feel they shouldn't have done. They owe you better than that.

And when somebody wrongs you, cheats you, slights you, insults you, it is your glory to overlook it. This is the thesis of that talk that's online of mine called Refuse to be Offended. You have the right to do that.

You don't have to be offended. Someone may offer you an offense, but you are not

obligated to take it. You can rule your own spirit.

You can be slow to anger. Then you are of great understanding. Then it's your discretion, which is one of Solomon's synonyms for wisdom.

Your wisdom is what makes you slow to anger. By what quality of mind can I rule my spirit and rule my emotions? By my wisdom. By what I know intellectually to be right.

By what my heart tells me God wants and approves. That's discretion. And a person's discretion will help them to not get angry quickly.

And if they learn not to get angry quickly, and sometimes not to get angry at all, just to overlook it. There's times when your fuse has to be quite long, but eventually there's a legitimate time when you have to get angry. Because anger, like fear, is something that can lead you the wrong way.

But it also is something that's a legitimate, normal emotion that is there to inspire action of some kind. If a tiger walks into the room, God has given you the good sense to be afraid and to inspire you to take precautions, to get away, to get outside, to do something. Fear, God's given that to animals too.

Animals have that. That's not a sin. That's what keeps them alive.

A rabbit that sees a hawk overhead is going to run and hide. Why? Because it experiences fear. That's good.

Fear is legitimate. What's illegitimate is when, because you fear consequences, or you fear danger, you neglect to do what you should do. You notice when fear, which is supposed to inspire right action, instead inhibits right action.

Because the right thing to do is scary, and so you're a coward and you don't do it. That's when fear is a sin. Likewise, anger.

Anger is there to inspire right action, confrontation of evil, standing up against what is offensive to God. Christians should be angry about that. Remember what it says about Saul when he was first, had been anointed king, but he hadn't really done anything yet as king.

There was that time when the people of Jabesh were, in chapter 11 of 1 Samuel, were threatened by the Ammonites who said, you know, we'll let you surrender if you let's poke out your right eye of every man in the city. And when this information came to Saul, it says in 1 Samuel 11, 6, Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused. And it inspired him to call an army together and go and deliver these people from this oppression.

So, the Spirit of God inspired anger in him. Because this was something to get angry

about. How dare these pagans come against these innocent people, threaten to poke their eyes out and subjugate them.

That's an injustice. Now, it's not an injustice against me. It's just a disinterested concern for justice.

I'm not the one they're poking the eye out of. It just makes me infuriated to hear that some innocent people like that are going to be attacked. So, the Spirit of God caused him to be angry.

So, anger is good. But the discretion of a man makes him be slow about getting angry. He has to figure out whether this is a case where anger is appropriate or not.

And if he decides that it is, he eventually gets to that point and acts as he should upon it. He doesn't let the sun go down on it. And he doesn't let his anger cause him to sin.

But he gets there when it's appropriate because his discretion tells him it's time to be angry now. It's not time to be angry now. But there is also that point where discretion will cause you to never get angry.

That is to say about a particular thing that is tempting you to be angry that you just never get there. You never get to the point of being angry. You're slow, but you decide, ah, I can let this one go.

Overlook the transgression. If I get angry every time somebody does something wrong to me, I'll probably be an angry man. I'm sure that everyone has people out there who have been alienated against them for some reason.

And you might not even know why. Somebody just doesn't like you anymore. And you hear that they gossip about you or that they are maligning you in some way.

Maybe you're not as lucky as I am. I have that happen all the time to me. But if I got angry about that every time, I'd just have to walk around in anger.

But I think, well, you've just got to let some things go. You've just got to not worry about it. You just got to, you can't please everybody.

And if people are wrongfully slandering you or something like that, well, there's times when you might have to address it. But other times, you just have to leave it in God's hands like David did. Shimei was casting dirt and rocks at David when he was fleeing from Absalom.

And accusing him falsely, he said, this evil has come on you, David, because of the injustice you did to the house of Saul. That guy was sure on the wrong track. David had never done one wrong thing to the house of Saul.

He'd been very generous to the house of Saul. It was a total false accusation, publicly shouting insults and slander against David, throwing rocks at him even. And of course, Joab and the army said, well, David, should we go cut this guy's head off? And David said, oh, you sons of Zeruiah, why don't you just calm down? If God sent him to curse me, let him do it.

If he doesn't, God will vindicate me. David could have gotten angry. There was a legitimate cause.

He just said, I'm going to let this one slide. I can't go out trying to stomp out all the fires of everyone who's going to not like me or do things or say bad things about me. I got to just overlook it.

It's the glory of a man to overlook a transgression. If you can't do that, you're a small minded person. You're a small man or woman.

If everything that could irritate you, you let it. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, love is not provoked. If somebody can provoke you, then you're not very loving.

And so your discretion and we might say your love will make you slow to anger. Now, in chapter 29 and verse 22, it says an angry man stirs up strife and a furious man abounds in transgression. Now, what it's saying here is if you're an angry person, not a person who on occasion has become angry over things that you should become angry about.

But you're an angry person. And there certainly are people like that. They just have the shortest fuse.

Anything that displeases them, you can count on. They're just going to fly off the handle. And there are certainly people, if you don't know them, more power to you.

You're a fortunate person. But most of us have known people that we know their fuse is short. And we know that you never can be quite sure what's going to set them off.

You even cringe when you hear someone else say something around them that you just know, oh, that's not going to go over well with that person. And you just, you walk on eggs around them. You feel like you can't just, you just can't be normal around them because even the slightest slight will be taken as an affront and they'll get angry.

And they're an angry person. Now, a person like that is just someone who stirs up strife unnecessarily. You see, stirring it up means it's not naturally arising.

You have to make it happen. You know, there's tranquil relationships between people. But the angry person goes and stirs something up, tries to bring strife where it's not naturally occurring.

If you're angry, you're going to be destroying relationships. The opposite of what God

wants us to do. And God wants to be peacemakers.

God wants us, he gives us the ministry of reconciliation. And instead of reconciling people, an angry man tends to make enemies of people, stirs up strife between people, tries to place wedges between himself and other people. And perhaps between other third parties as well.

Anger as a character trait is a very bad trait and very damaging. A furious man abounds in transgression. He's going to do a lot of things that are wrong.

An angry man is going to do a lot of things that are transgressions against God. And therefore, being an angry man is obviously to be highly avoided. In chapter 30, in verse 33, this is that proverb I mentioned.

Holy Hubert at the University of Berkeley was challenged by a heckler. And he said, Hubert, prove to me the Bible's true. And Hubert reached out and grabbed the guy's nose and twisted it.

And he said, as the churning of milk produces butter and the ringing of the nose produces blood, so the forcing of wrath produces strife. And the blood coming out of that student's nose proved that the Bible was true. He ringed his nose.

I don't recommend evangelists to do that kind of thing. Holy Hubert was a little outside the box. I don't know if anyone ever got saved through his preaching, but he certainly became a legend on the UC Berkeley campus.

But this scripture is kind of interesting. As the churning of milk produces butter and the ringing of the nose produces blood, so the forcing of wrath produces strife. What does that mean? Well, one thing that is not obvious from the translation is that in the Hebrew, all three of these verbs are the same word.

Churning, ringing, and forcing. They're just the same word in all three cases in the Hebrew. It literally means squeezing or pressing.

When they made butter in the Middle East in those days, they put curds or whatever they put, the milk product, into a leather bag. And they would squeeze it and twist it. A little bit like you picture them twisting the nose.

It was a squeezing, it was a pressing, it was a forcing of the curds together to be more compact and to cause it to essentially, we say, churn. Churning butter. Likewise, if you squeeze or press somebody's nose, they're going to bleed.

Now, then what is the meaning of squeezing or forcing of wrath producing strife? It seems to me that this is talking about forcing wrath in somebody else. As I thought about this, I think what he has in mind is this, that when somebody is prone to get angry

and you needle them and you pester them and you force the issue, you kind of squeeze it out of them. You kind of bring about strife unnecessarily by churning up that person's wrath that's already in them.

Somebody who you can see is already getting irritated, instead of pouring oil on the water and trying to bring about calm, you just keep pestering, you keep doing the thing that you just kind of take some delight in seeing them lose it. Of course, none of you would ever do that, but some people are that wicked. Some people like to see someone else lose it, and they know how to do it.

And just as you could bring blood out of a nose if you put the right kind of pressure upon it, so you can bring wrath or strife out of somebody if you force their wrath, if you squeeze them, if you pressure them too much, in other words, if you provoke them. Again, Paul said that love is not provoked, but not everybody is so loving as to not be provoked. And there are certainly people that you can provoke.

And a lot of times, I mean, I think what you talk about is a case where you actually know that you're doing it. Not that you accidentally offend somebody because you were slightly insensitive or had no idea what they were sensitized to. But, you know, they're getting angry.

And instead of backing off, you keep pestering them to see if you can get their goat. And I think that's what he's talking about. That brings strife when you churn up somebody else's wrath in them by your actions toward them.

Now, of course, the opposite of being an angry person is being a self-composed person. And there's quite a few scriptures about the need for self-composure, self-governing. In Proverbs as well, Proverbs 17, verse 27, says, He who has knowledge spares words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

He follows it up with, even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace. When he shuts his lips, he's considered perceptive. Funny thing is, someone who wants to be perceived as perceptive always wants to speak out every insight they think they have and hope people see them as perceptive.

So, people who will think you're perceptive are the ones who aren't hearing you talk so much. If you use fair words, you're an understanding person. If you're calm, you don't feel like you have to, you know, you're not always feeling nervously necessary to contribute something verbally to the conversation.

You'll be counted wise if you hold your peace. I think everybody has heard this saying, and everyone thinks of this saying when they hear this proverb. It's sort of like a popular saying, I don't know if it was Mark Twain or who, but he said it's better to hold your peace and have people think you're a fool than to open your mouth and remove all

doubt.

And that's exactly what's said here. If a person holds his peace, people think he's wise, whether he is or not. If he opens his mouth, that'll dispel any doubts about that.

But the calm spirit is what I'm referring to here. A person has a calm spirit because he's got understanding. He's self-composed.

You ever been with somebody in a driving together, the two of you in the car, you're sitting alone somewhere with somebody in the room and they're not talking and you just feel like you've got to say something, you feel like it's awkward, the silence, you feel like it's your obligation to make some conversation happen because they're not doing it. Ever have that feeling? I have that a lot. I've been with people who are just quiet people.

I've just been with people that when you're with somebody and they're not saying anything, you feel like somebody should be saying something. I don't have anything to say either, but I'll say something because it shouldn't be so quiet here. It just seems awkward.

And yet, if you have understanding, you can just calm down and not say anything. You don't have to feel nervous about the silence and feel like you have to contribute something. Even a fool is kind of wise when he holds his peace.

And the man who has knowledge spares words. And if he's an understanding man, he can just relax. There's the spirit.

Be calm in his spirit. Self-composed, not driven to have to say something or do something when it's not really called for. In chapter 20 and verse 3, it says, It is honorable for a man to stop striving since any fool can start a quarrel.

Anyone can start a fight and anyone can keep a fight going. What not everyone can do is just stop. Not everyone seems to have the ability to stop quarreling.

That is an honorable thing. And not all people are honorable. Not all people have that ability.

That's why it's an honorable thing to find someone who does. And that person says, OK, I'll let you have the last word about that. What? You know? I don't want to have the last word.

I want this to go on and on and on. Well, no, I'm just going to let you have the last word. I'm not interested in arguing about that anymore.

Thank you. Not out of cowardice. Not because you don't think you can beat that last argument that they gave.

You always feel like you can do that, whether you can or not. Your pride always tells you that you're right. And therefore, whatever they say, no matter how valid you can nullify it, legitimately or not, you can keep the strife going on because you don't want that person to have the last word.

You don't want to concede victory to that person. There's a conflict here, a strife going on. It's a war.

You have to win. Your pride makes you want to win. But it's an honorable thing to just swallow your pride and say, you know, okay, we'll just call that a stalemate.

Even though I know I've got a great answer for the last thing they said. But I know that if I say it, they'll come back with something and then I'll have to come back with something and it'll just be generating more strife. So I'll just do the mature thing and just stop.

Just stop it. And so that's an honorable thing for a man to do, to be able to just control himself, compose himself, not have to be the one who gets the last word, not the one who always comes out looking like he's on top of the conflict. Just stop.

That's self-control. That's self-composure. That's a certain character quality.

In chapter 25 and verse 28, one of my favorites on this, Proverbs 25, 28 says, whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Now we've already seen this expression, ruling the spirit already. Solomon has equated that with being slow to anger.

Remember he said, he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. He that rules his own spirit is greater than he that can take a city. So to rule your spirit is sort of another way of talking about being slow to anger.

Or more properly, just controlling your emotions. Anger being an emotion that is particularly difficult to control. It's difficult to control your anger.

But other emotions too. Your spirit here has to do with your attitude. And that which your emotions are having an effect upon.

You have to rule that. And if you don't rule that, then you're like a city without defenses against invasion. Your walls are broken down.

That means anyone can come in and rule you. If you're not ruling yourself, it won't be that you won't be ruled. You'll be ruled by whoever you let rule you.

If you can get angry easily, then the person who gets you angry is ruling your spirit, not you. If you can get offended just because someone wants to offend you, then they are ruling you. You're not ruling your own spirit.



If you can refuse to be offended, then that's you taking control of your own spirit. You can't control whether people will do offensive things. You can't control whether people do irritating and annoying, and even evil and malicious things.

There's no control you have over that, but you have control over you. And if you don't have control over you, then they will. They will decide whether you'll be angry.

You won't. They will decide whether you're offended. They will decide whether you're unhappy.

They will decide whether you're having a bad day or not. Because you're not. You're not deciding that.

They are. You're simply caving in to their control, like a city with no walls. They can just walk in and do with you what they want.

That's not okay. I think it was Will Rogers. He said, I am at the mercy of any man who can make me lose my temper.

In other words, there should be no man that can make me lose my temper, or else he is my ruler. I have to rule me, not let him rule me. I am going to have to answer to God from my own spirit, my own heart, and what condition... I have to keep my heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

That word keep means to guard it. I have to defend my heart against intrusion from other controls, from people I don't agree with. You know, the worst part of letting someone else control your spirit, in the sense that someone can make you angry, is that the person you're allowing to control it is hostile to you.

I mean, it would be different if they were on your side. You might be saying, you decide what I'll feel. You're my friend.

But the person we're talking about is someone who's attacking you, somebody who wants to hurt you, somebody who's offering you an offense. If they can get your guilt, then they're controlling you. So, being self-composed, self-controlled in your spirit, is necessary, and it will mean a lot less getting angry, because you'll be deciding, I don't want to be angry.

I will choose not to take offense here. And as I say in that lecture, by that title, we have to remember that whenever some irritant is presented to us by somebody else's statements or behavior, in other words, whenever there is an offense felt by you from someone else, there are really only two possibilities. One is they intended to offend you.

The other is that they were clueless and didn't have any idea that they were offending you. And the second is probably more often the case than the first. In most cases, I

would think, at least in Christian circles, or in families, most people are not really wanting to offend you.

And if they do something offensive to you, they're probably not aware that you're so sensitized to that. They probably weren't aware that they're speaking something that pushes one of your buttons. It's not likely that they wanted to make you angry, though there are some people who will want to.

But the point is, in so many cases, if you feel offended, if you think about it, you think, well, you know, I don't think they intended to offend me. It was accidental. They were clueless.

They were insensitive, but they didn't know they were insensitive. Well, then, if they didn't intend to offend me, then I'm really a small man. If I insist on being offended about someone who didn't even want to offend me, I'm just looking to spur up strife where there isn't any.

I'm the one causing trouble then. If they don't mean any ill, they're not malicious, but I decide I'm going to take offense to this, then I'm going to introduce the malice into the situation. That's just plain childish.

If somebody offends me, and I judge, well, I don't think they meant it, then I can just overlook it. It's a glory to a man to overlook a transgression. Why bother with it? Why make an issue out of it if it's not really an issue? Now, of course, the other possibility is that they did intend to offend you.

And then all the more reason not to take offense. Why let somebody who wants to offend you do so? Why let them control what's going on inside of you? That's your domain, not theirs. The fact that they want to offend you means they're not friendly toward you.

That's the last kind of person you want to turn your control of your heart over to. You maintain control of that. If someone didn't mean to offend you, then you'd be a jerk to be offended.

If they did mean to offend you, then you're being a victim to be offended. You don't need to be victimized by them. You can rule your own spirit.

You can keep the walls up around your city and not let it be invaded and controlled by outsiders who are hostile to you. In chapter 29, verse 11, it says, A fool vents all his feelings. A fool vents all his feelings.

But a wise man holds them back. Again, this is being self-composed. Everyone has feelings, which, if expressed, would be regretted later.

Just anger, jealousy, almost any kind of feeling, even good feelings, have an

inappropriate time of being expressed. And the person who just does what he feels like doing, or says what she feels like saying, that person who doesn't hold it back and judge first, is this really something I'm going to want to do? Is this really some feeling I should ventilate right now? Or is this something I should hold back? The wise person holds it back at least long enough to decide if it's the right thing to do or not. But some people don't even make any judgment.

They just ventilate. If they feel it, they say it. If they feel it, they do it.

And they're a fool. Because that's what I'm saying about emotions. Emotions are God-given.

Emotions can make life charming or miserable. It can make it delightful. There are delightful emotions and there are horrible emotions.

But emotions are simply part of the human condition. They're part of God-likeness. God has emotions too.

He feels grief. He feels joy. He feels anger.

He feels pain. It's part of being in the image of God that we have this wide range of emotions. But it's also part of being in the image of God that we govern our emotions and they don't govern us.

Because you can never be sure that your emotions are really called for. All kinds of things can make you feel emotional, out of touch with reality. It can be the time of the month.

It can be almost anything. It can be you didn't get enough sleep. Lots of things can make you have irrational emotional feelings.

And to be governed by those is just plain foolish. You don't just let them fly. You don't ventilate everything you feel if you're wise.

A wise person holds it back at least until that person can self-assess. Is this really an emotion that would be desirable for me to express this? And if so, in what way do I think it would be desirable? Just because I feel like I got it off my chest? Like I ventilated? You know, that is what for a long time psychologists were saying was a recommended treatment for anger. It was called the hydraulic theory of anger.

And that was that like anger wells up inside you and it's not going to be healthy for you unless you ventilate somewhere. So they would say go down to the basement and kick the trash cans around the basement and ventilate your anger. You know, punch a mattress until you've let it all out of you.

Most psychologists today, even non-Christians, would say that was stupid. It was a

popular view at one time. And views that are popular now will become stupid in retrospect too if they're not following the word of God.

But the point is, the thought was, if you're angry, there's some pressure building up in you like air filling up a balloon and it's going to pop eventually if you don't have some outlet. So you've got to go and ventilate it. But that's not biblical.

It's a fool who ventilates all his feelings. You're not told to ventilate your anger. You're supposed to put it away.

Put away wrath. Put away anger, Paul said. In Ephesians 4. What, around verse 30-something? 32 or something.

And so, controlling it. Saying, okay, here it is. I'm going to put it over here.

I'm going to put it out. I'm not going to use that right now. This is not something I'm going to be utilizing this anger.

So I'll just diffuse it. And you control your spirit. You don't ventilate every feeling you have.

Or else you're a fool. Now, the only other thing I wanted to make, the other point I wanted to make today was on an entirely different subject. But it was sort of a scrap left over after talking about moods and attitudes and so forth in general.

There's one attitude that needs to be considered. And that is, of course, the attitude of self-confidence. Which in almost all cases, in modern times, is considered to be a good thing.

You really need to have more self-confidence. Now, I realize that what people call self-confidence might not be the same thing that everybody else means by that term. And I would just point out that in Proverbs 28, 26, Solomon said, He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.

But whoever walks wisely will be delivered. Trusting in your own heart. Trusting in your own inner resources.

Trusting in yourself. That's not wise. Why? Well, because it's only wise to trust in trustworthy things.

Your heart is not entirely trustworthy. Jeremiah described a certain state of people's hearts. He said that the heart was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Well, if something is deceitful, then you don't want to trust in it. You never know. So, there might be some deceit in your heart.

You have to get your truth and your confidence in something more objective than just your interior self-opinion, self-thinking, your self-resources. You can't trust in yourself. Now, on the other hand, trusting in God may look like self-confidence from someone looking on outside.

Because if you trust in God, you'll be acting confidently. And to an outsider, it just looks like you're a self-confident person. And it's not really yourself at all that you're confident in.

You're confident in God. You're not trusting in yourself. You're trusting in God.

But because you're trusting, you're not insecure. Because you're trusting, you're a confident person. You're not facing the world with trepidation and fear and intimidation.

So, confidence in God is, of course, what we're called to have. Trusting God. It says in Jeremiah, I think it's chapter 17, it says, Woe to him who puts his trust in man.

Well, I'm a man. So, if I put my trust in me, I'm putting my trust in man. And there's a woe pronounced on people like that.

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. So, self-confidence is not really an appropriate thing. Although, sometimes people get a little too legalistic about this and say, Well, you don't want to be self-confident.

When, in fact, there is a sense that being self-confident or appearing self-confident may not really be that you're trusting in yourself so much as you're trusting in God. I remember when I was first pressed upon in the Calvary Chapel of Santa Cruz to be an elder. I didn't really want the position because I like to teach, but I don't like to eld.

I don't consider myself having gifts of leadership, only gifts of teaching. And I felt very insecure about it. I was talking to one of the deacons in the church over coffee once about that.

And I was contemplating whether to accept the position of eldership. And I said, I don't really feel that this is something I don't really know that I have the abilities to... I've never felt very confident in leading people. It's hard enough just leading myself, taking that responsibility.

I don't want to be responsible for what other people do. And he said something I'd never heard before. He said, well, you just need to trust the anointing.

I'd never heard that expression. And I almost reacted negatively to it because it wasn't a biblical expression. But anointing is a biblical expression.

That's the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He's essentially saying you trust what the Holy Spirit has given you to do. You trust the Holy Spirit in the situation where you're doing

what he's assigned to you.

You trust him to give you the gifts necessary for what he assigned you to do. That's what he meant. And although I kind of reacted to the non-biblical expression immediately in a suspicious way, I thought about it a little bit.

I thought, well, that's really true. That's just really mean trusting in God. What you're trusting in is that what you're called to do is what God will anoint you or enable you by his spirit to do, to gift you to do it.

So that you are trusting in him. You're moving forward. You'll look like a self-confident person, but you're really trusting in God and you know it.

You're not worried about it being, about your own limitations, your own abilities or lack thereof. You're just figuring if God said to do it, that's what I'm going to do. Like Peter walking on water, he couldn't trust in himself.

But as long as Jesus said to do it, Jesus gave the assignment, come on. Well, as long as he trusted Christ, he was able to do it. And he certainly looked like a man who was confidently walking on the water, maybe.

I don't know how confident he looked, but he was for a while confident in Christ, not in himself. And no one could think that he could trust himself to walk on water, but you can trust God to give you the ability to do what he commands you to do. He won't command you to do something if it's not something he intends to enable you to do.

And here's the thing. There's two statements of Paul that are similar to each other, but different in an important way about that have to do with this matter of self-confidence or God confidence. In Romans 7, this very well-known statement, I think almost all Christians know it.

Romans 7, 18, Paul said, For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells. In my flesh means in what I am by nature. My flesh is my natural self.

In what I bring to the table, there's nothing really good. If it's left to me and my resources, nothing good is going to come because I don't have anything good in myself, in my flesh. There dwells no good thing.

So I really can't have much self-confidence if I don't think there's anything good in myself, in my flesh, in my natural person. But, if you look over at the book of Philemon, also written by Paul, he's writing to a friend of his, and that's, of course, just before the book of Hebrews, a single chapter, but in writing to Philemon, in verse 6, Paul says that he's saying this is what I'm basically wishing and praying for you. In verse 4, he says, You're in my prayers.

And in verses 5 and 6, he's explaining what it is he's praying about for Philemon. And he says in verse 6, that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you. Now, are there good things in me? Well, Paul just said in Romans 7, 18, in me, that in my flesh there dwells no good thing.

But now he says to Philemon, your sharing of your faith is going to become effective insofar as you acknowledge every good thing that is in you. But Philemon might say, but I've just read your book of Romans, you said there's no good thing in me, in my flesh. And Paul says, yeah, we're not talking about in your flesh.

Every good thing that is in you in Christ Jesus. You see, there is you in your flesh, and then there's you in Christ Jesus. In your flesh, there's nothing good in you.

In Christ Jesus, there are good things in you because they are in him. His spirit is in you, and his gifts, and his working. It is God that works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Well, if he's working in you to will and do of his good pleasure, how could you be inadequate? So, Paul says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, not through his own efforts. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says not that we are sufficient of ourselves for any of this. Our sufficiency is of God.

He didn't consider himself sufficient to do any of the ministry he was doing, but he did it confidently. Not with self-confidence, but with confidence in God. With God's sufficiency.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul said, God is able to make all grace abound to you so that you, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound into every good work. God's grace abounding to you is the sufficiency that he gives you to abound in every good work. I don't trust in me, I trust in the grace of God.

Now, see, here's the problem. As long as I do trust in me, I can probably face certain challenges and overcome them. Just because there's a certain amount of challenges up to a certain level that we can manage if we put out enough fleshly effort.

But when the challenges get to pass a certain point, we're out of our depth. And the resources we have, naturally, we just can't handle it. We're going to fall.

We're going to lose our temper. We're going to lose our victory. We're going to lose our composure or whatever.

We just can't handle it because we don't have it in ourselves. And the problem is that we do have it in ourselves to handle some small things. And as long as most of our life is small things, we can have the impression we're living the Christian life without ever trusting in the grace of God because we're handling it.

I can do this. And then when the really hard things come and we blow it, we think, well, what kind of Christian am I? Well, the wrong kind because you're trusting in yourself all the time. And you're managing it because the challenges you face were not that hard.

But when the hard ones come, then you realize, oh, I need God. And you don't realize that you should have been walking in confidence in God, even for the small things. And he gives small graces for the small challenges.

But when the challenges get bigger, he gives more grace. That's what he said to Paul. And Paul said, this thorn in the flesh is tormenting me.

God, take it away. He said, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness.

God doesn't expect us to handle even the small stuff with self-confidence. There's no good thing in my flesh that I can bring to this. But in Christ Jesus, there's some good things in me.

So, he says to Flamin, your ministry, your sharing of your faith, there's going to be an impact in it. There's going to be effectiveness in it if you acknowledge every good thing that's in you in Christ Jesus. If you're not trusting in the anointing, if you're saying, I'm afraid I can't do this.

I mean, it looks like God's put me in the position to do it. I just don't have the ability. I can't do that.

Well, that might seem humble. But it's really dishonoring to God because it's saying, I don't have any good things in me in Christ Jesus that would enable me to do this. Well, in Christ Jesus, maybe you do.

Maybe you've just never lived your life in Christ Jesus. Maybe depending on yourself all the time in your flesh. And in your flesh, you're able to eke along in a way that's respectable.

But then when there's a big challenge, you don't know anything about trusting in God. Because that's not what you've been doing. But realizing that in you, in Christ Jesus, there are good things.

There are gifts. There is the Holy Spirit. There is the ability to walk like Jesus walked.

That is there in you, in Christ. In the Holy Spirit. So, the line between self-confidence and God-confidence is very hard to discern at times.

It seems to me. And especially if God has gifted you an area where you regularly operate in the gift, you can begin to think of it as, yeah, I've just got this wired, you know. I'm pretty confident about teaching in any size group.



Not because I think I'm equal to it. And I honestly don't. I mean, there are some things, I've learned some things, I could pull it off.

You know, I could pull it off in a lot of areas I could teach without the anointing. Without the gift. There's just some natural knowledge, accumulated stuff that can be, I know how to say it.

I know how to teach. But there would be no power in it. There would be no impact in it.

Unless it's the Holy Spirit's gifting. And I've known since I was young, I cannot trust in natural ability. In fact, I took before I was filled with the Spirit, I actually took speech classes and learned how to give speeches.

And I won debates and speech competitions before I even was filled with the Spirit. But when I got filled with the Spirit, I thought, I don't want to use any of that stuff. I don't want to depend on all those methods and techniques and stuff that I learned.

Because that's the flesh. You can impress people in the flesh if you've got certain aptitudes. But you can't make a spiritual impact by operating in the flesh.

You can only make a spiritual impact by operating through the Spirit. And that means you just don't trust in yourself. And you just say, okay, God, you put me here.

This is your task. You do it. I'm available.

It's your gifting that I have to trust in. I have to trust in God's anointing, not in human ability. That might even exist.

I might even have the human ability to do it. I mean, some people are excellent teachers before they're Christians. And then they get saved.

And they can teach just as excellently as Christians. But they might not even have the anointing. And so they're very great presenters.

But there's no spiritual impact on anyone. It's an impressive presentation. They could do it if they were even saved.

The same thing. They have natural abilities. But a person with less natural ability, God chooses the foolish things, sometimes the good, sometimes the wise, can have greater impact at times.

Simply because of the anointing. When I first heard Lonnie Frisbee preaching at Calvary Chapel, he could hardly read. He'd taken so much LSD he couldn't even read well.

He had this living letters he'd read a few, with difficulty, he'd read a few verses and then he'd start talking. And when he'd start talking, the place was electrical. I mean, he was

not an eloquent man or an intelligent man.

He might have been intelligent, but his brain had been damaged. But when he spoke, God moved through him. And there was never a time he spoke that 50 people didn't come forward to receive Christ.

I always envied that about him. Because I had taken speech classes. I could read pretty well.

And I could talk better than that. But I couldn't get people saved like that. And it was hearing him and seeing him that made me realize there's something else that I need in my Christian life that this man has that I don't have.

And then I realized, I came to understand over time that what they had was being filled with the Spirit. And so, trusting in the Holy Spirit, trusting in God, and what he puts in you in Christ is a legitimate and necessary thing. If you don't acknowledge those good things that are in you in Christ, you'll be ineffective.

But of course, that's not the same thing as being self-confident and thinking, well, I've got this wired. I can handle this. I go into almost every situation thinking and praying, you know, I can do this, but it'll be worthless.

I can pull this off. And most people say, well, that was pretty good. But no one will go out with any spiritual change in their life.

The impact will not be spiritual impact. And I can't do anything about that. I can't make people have a spiritual reaction.

Only God can do that. And so, you've got to trust in God for those things. Well, I've gone quite over time, so I'm going to have to quit here.