

Chapter 19

OVERCOMING ANGER AT GOD

Do you realize what happens when one becomes a Christian? The Bible doesn't say that we simply become better people: John 5:24 says that we pass from death to life! Ephesians 5:8 says that we were once darkness but now are light in the Lord! Colossians 1:13 says that God delivered us from darkness and conveyed us to the Kingdom of His Son! Ephesians 1:1 indicates that we are now saints! And 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that we have become a new creation in Christ Jesus!

If all of this is true, and it is true according to God's infallible Word, then why don't we think and feel and act differently than we do? Why can't we overcome our weaknesses, learn to trust God, enter into His peace and rest?

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says that we (Christians!) are involved in a mighty, ongoing spiritual battle, and that our war is against strongholds in the mind. The clearest definition of a stronghold that I have found is that a stronghold is simply a lie in the mind or heart (mind and heart are used interchangeably in the Bible – as in Proverbs 23:7: *“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”*). When Christ stood up in the Synagogue in Nazareth and announced His mandate, He quoted the passage in Isaiah that reads in part, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind”*.(1) Thus my ministry is to expose and bring repentance and healing to the wounds, the sins, and the lies in the hearts and minds of Christians.

For some Christians there is deep in their hearts a knot, a lump, a lie of resentment against God. “What! A Christian can resent God! Is that possible?” It is not only possible but apparently very common. Dr. R. T. Kendal says that based on his broad counseling experience He believes that perhaps 80 to 90% of all Christians have a stronghold of resentment against God hidden deep within their hearts.

Think of a stronghold in the mind like the coffee grounds and filter in a percolator. As the pure water is heated up and pumped through the grounds, the coffee drips into the carafe. Now imagine that you have a filter in your mind and instead of it containing coffee grounds it contains sludge from the bottom of a sewer. As pure water – the water of the Word – enters into the mind, and as every experience of life enters into the mind, everything becomes contaminated by the lies in that stronghold. Therefore, every experience of life and even the Word of God itself becomes defiled and corrupted. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*(2) If one's heart is pure then he can “see” God not only in the Bible but in all of life. If one's heart is not pure then all of life is darkened and the light of God becomes obscured.

Imagine a man whose automobile continually breaks down. His friend says, “Why don't you take your car to a mechanic?” “Oh, no!” he says, “I got cheated by a mechanic one time and I will never trust another mechanic!” There is an old saying, “Don't cuss the mechanic when your car breaks down,” because the mechanic is the man who can fix your car. If your life is broken down: with depression, confusion, hopelessness, don't blame God! He is the One who can fix your life. Many Christians have lies in their minds about God, Satan's lies, and they are agreeing with the liar, the accuser, that God is unloving and untrustworthy.

- A Christian lady said that she grew up in a Christian home but that her father and mother were always arguing. This caused her much stress, and she prayed that God would take care of this situation and bring peace to her father and mother. Then when she was 9 years old her father came into her room one day in a serious frame of mind and sat down with her. He told her that he and her mother didn't love one another anymore and that he was going to get a divorce. He also said that he had found another lady and that he was going to marry her. But, he said, this doesn't affect my relationship with you, you are my special little girl and I will always love you and spend much time with you. Then her father walked out of the room, and that was the last time she ever saw him. That experience caused a huge wound in her heart, and it also resulted in a strong lie in her mind: "You can't trust men, you can't trust husbands, you can't trust fathers, and you can't trust God!" The stronghold in her mind continually broadcast the lie, "Don't trust God with your heart, He will break His promises!"
- And imagine the situation of this girl's mother, a situation that is duplicated many times in this world. The day came the day when her husband broke the news to her that he had found the woman "that God always intended him to have" and that he was bailing out. She cried out, "God, where are you! I've been trying to have a Christian home, I've been praying that you would heal the breach between me and my husband, and now he is leaving me and my children to fend for ourselves. How could you let this happen to me?" The stronghold in her mind says, "No matter how hard you try or how much you pray God will not come through for you. God doesn't really care." I ministered to just such a woman recently. She was in deep depression, her 6 year old son was vomiting almost every night and had gone partially deaf, and her teen-aged daughter had attempted suicide, all subsequent to their being abandoned by their husband and father.
- And think of the situation of a Christian couple who cannot conceive children. They love children, they yearn to be parents, but neither prayer nor physicians changes their situation. The wife cries out, "Why, God? Thousands of teenagers are getting pregnant and having abortions and throwing their babies in the trash, but we?????" The lie in their minds says, "God doesn't hear or God doesn't care, so what's the use!" I know of a couple who faced this situation and rather than sink into depression and resentment against God they offered their love and time and service to a Christian orphanage, and over many years they became the beloved surrogate parents to dozens of children.
- Another example is the couple who have a child that is born with physical or mental defects. This happens to millions of families. I'm sure that in every case there is an agonized cry of "Why, God?" The stress of such situations drives many couples to the divorce court, or to the abandonment of their faith in God. I have dear friends who have been faced with this situation. Their 27 year old daughter has never developed, has not been able to walk or talk or take care of herself. They have loved and cared for her as the special gift of God that she is. And the result has been that this couple has become Christ-like and is a source of strength and inspiration to many. We may say that we want to become Christ-like, and this is the primary goal of our existence, but that does not happen in a vacuum. The transformation of our character is forged in the fire of suffering. While the Bible counsels us to thank God for the trials and testing that come to us, our response is usually to run from them as fast as we can run.
- The other part of this particular trial concerns the people who are born with a physical or mental defect. In August I ministered to a young man in prison who was born with a club foot. He told me that he had cursed his foot times without number. I led him to renounce those curses, to repent for his resentment against God, and then I prayed for him. In a few

moments he hurried back to me thanking God that for the first time in his life he was walking without a limp.

- A pastor told about a summer youth camp at a mountain retreat. He said that all the smart and athletic and beautiful kids immediately formed a clique and excluded all of the kids whom they labeled losers. One of the teenagers was born with cerebral palsy. He walked with a limp and could only talk with painful effort and a twisted face. The superior group took delight in making fun of this young man and mimicking his mannerisms. The pastor said that he grew so angry at the haughty group that he wanted to do physical violence to them. On the last day of camp came the time for testimonies. The smart kids strutted up to the microphone and self-confidently shared what they had gleaned from the week. Then the disabled boy limped up the aisle. Many of the kids punched each other and giggled, saying “What is he going to say?” The boy took the mike and slowly and painfully enunciated his testimony: “I love Jesus, and Jesus loves me.” Then he limped back to his seat. The crowd was silenced and stunned. Tears started rolling down the faces of many. Then the young people started coming to the altar and falling on their knees. The Spirit of God touched them deeply.
- And then there are the people, and there are many of them, who were sexually molested as children or teens. The lie in many of their minds is: “I am responsible for what happened, I am guilty, God rejected me, God hates me.”
- And the people who prayed for healing for a loved one or for themselves, but they were not healed.

But one of the biggest reasons that people have anger and resentment against God is because of problems they have had with their children. As the parents of four children, my wife and I had the thought when they were little ones: We love our kids, but they are so demanding! Won't it be nice when they become teenagers! When they became teens, we thought, Oh my! This is worse than when they were little. We didn't have the wisdom to solve the more serious problems that came at that age. We loved them but yearned for the time when they would be grown and married and on their own. Then our problems would be over. Ha! They are still your kids and their problems are bigger still. And sometimes your grown kids come back home, and sometimes they bring their kids, or sometimes they send their kids while they run off to Neverland, or parents have to go and rescue their grandkids from their children who have turned into Frankenstein's monster. Your children can break your hearts!

- They can fall in with the wrong friends and turn to alcohol or drugs or gangs and start lying to you, stealing from you and become a stranger, a demonized stranger.
- They can reject your faith and your values and turn to no religion or a false religion.
- Your teenaged daughter can come home and tell you that she is pregnant and is thinking about an abortion, or you can learn that she has already had that procedure done. A young man in Mexico said that his sister had just come home with the news that she was pregnant and that their father had furiously condemned her and said, “You're guilty!” As if she needed to get that information. Parents would do well to remember how Jesus handled the situation of the woman taken in adultery.
- Or your son or daughter might move out of your home and into an apartment with their lover, thus announcing their dismissal of your feelings and your faith.
- Or your son or daughter might tell you, or you might learn in a roundabout fashion, that he or she has embraced the homosexual lifestyle.
- Or your child might grow up and totally reject you and renounce any relationship with you henceforth. Your daughter might marry a controlling man who forbids her and prevents her from having any contact with her family. This can also happen to a son who marries a

controlling wife. Or your child might decide because of real or perceived wounds to curtail any relationship with you and even to prevent their children, your grandchildren, from having a relationship or even getting to know you. I have ministered to parents who have been the victims of each of these wounding situations.

- Or your child, a child from a Christian home, might end up in prison.
- Or one of the worst things imaginable might happen to your child: he might commit suicide. This is what happened to the 28 year old son of Nina, a Christian mother. The son, Bud, had a wife and 2 small children. His wife had a job working in a bar and he argued with her again and again about it, but she would not agree to stop working there. In frustration and depression he hanged himself. The mother went through all the feelings of guilt and self-condemnation that go with a suicide in a family, and she asked God again and again why He did not stop her son from taking this step. Some months later a friend asked her, “Do you have unforgiveness toward your son, and toward God?” and she admitted that she did. When she forgave her son, and God, and asked forgiveness from God for blaming Him, peace started returning to her heart. It is true of many Christians that they blame God for something the devil has orchestrated. Satan is the one who comes to steal and kill and destroy.

Just a word about suicide: Suicide tends to repeat itself in families and among friends. In addition to the scriptural truth that if you judge another you will tend to repeat the same conduct (Romans 2:1), I believe that there is a spirit of suicide, a demonic spirit, that invades families and friends of suicide victims. The most important thing you can do as a parent if a family member or friend of your children has committed suicide is to talk with them and pray with them about the scheme of the devil to draw them to commit this terrible action. Your following this counsel may prevent another tragedy in your family.

So how are we to deal with the hurtful things that happen between us and our children?

- Forgive them 70 times 7 – in other words times without number.
- Repent of your sins against your children, ask God to forgive you, and ask your children to forgive you. I have run into the idea that parents should never ask their children to forgive them. For instance, I asked a mother in Mexico if she had ever asked her son’s forgiveness, and she responded: “No, I’m his mother!” as if it were unthinkable. That was an attitude of pride based on a cultural norm that was also based on pride. When she humbled herself and asked her son to forgive her it brought not only an emotional and spiritual healing but a physical healing.
- Keep praying. Quin Sherrer(3) said that when she had her first child she spent two days and nights in a small rural hospital going through heavy labor pains. On the third morning, a Sunday, she was worn out. She got up, packed her bags and waddled out of the hospital. Her husband and mother drove up as she was standing outside on the sidewalk. They asked in alarm, “What are you doing?” She said, “I’ve had enough! I quit! I’m going home.” They said, “You can’t quit! You’re having a baby!” So she went back inside and endured 6 more hours of labor before their precious little girl was born.

Labor always precedes birth! Paul wrote to the church in Galatia and said that, “I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.”(Gal. 4:19) Perhaps you have been praying for your children for years, for decades, and you have decided, “That’s enough, I quit!” You can’t quit! They are your children. As Nehemiah said, “Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes!” Fight for them! Pray for them! Don’t stop. Don’t give up.

PRAYER:

Oh, Lord, forgive me for resenting You, for my anger at You, for blaming You. I don't understand the painful things that have happened during my life, but I repent for agreeing with the accuser against You. I repent for questioning Your love and Your faithfulness. Heal my heart, Lord. I love you. Thank you so much for continuing to love me and not giving up on me. Amen.

Endnotes

- (1) Luke 4:15
- (2) Matthew 5:8
- (3) Quin Sherrer & Ruthanne Garlock, A Woman's Guide to Spiritual Warfare