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GOD'S REST

(Quoted from David Wilkerson)

A pastor told me a beautiful story. A young woman in his church had been born with an extreme facial disfigurement. All through her teen years she dreamed of meeting a man who would love her despite her handicap. Her desire continued into her twenties, and she longed to have a child as well. Through those years she faithfully brought her request before the Lord, hoping he would answer.

Not long ago, the young woman approached the pastor. She handed him a bar of soap and a baby rattle. She said, "Pastor, I need you to take these things off my hands. They are connected to a dream I've carried since I was a little girl. Every time my father washed up he asked me, "Honey, go get me some soap." I loved getting it for him, it made me feel needed and wanted by him. As I grew older, I always hoped a husband would say that to me, then I could respond in love as I did with my dad. As for the baby rattle, it reminds me of my desire to have a child.

"I want you to know, I don't need these anymore. I've laid those dreams down, and I've traded them in for a better one. I'm at peace with my condition. I know it will never change. So I've surrendered it to the Lord. Now Jesus totally fills my life. He has become my source of joy. I've found in him what no husband could give me. He took my old dreams and gave me himself. The Lord is my husband. And the kids you see flocking to me in church are the children he's given me. I've been blessed without measure. So, please, take these symbols for me. I've finally been freed from their weight."

The pastor says all of this woman's discouragement is gone now. She couldn't be happier. And she had become the most loving person in his church. Then the pastor confessed that he also was changing. "I've surrendered my dream of having a large church," he said. "My congregation wasn't growing as I thought it should. I wanted to see fruit from my ministry. That desire caused me to strive to succeed in others' eyes. But I only want one thing now, and that is a church that loves. I want to shepherd people who care for each other, a loving family of believers. It doesn't matter how large or small we are. When I stand before the Lord, I want to know I taught my people to love as Jesus loves." This man and this young woman have come into God's rest.

QUOTES & OBSERVATIONS

- Pauline Parham died some years back, and Christ for the Nations Newsletter said about her: So strong was the presence of God she carried with her that even a four-year-old child said when she prayed for him it made his eyes water. One young lady who lived as her companion for a number of years called her praying, "The thunder before the rain"
 - Love is not a feeling, it is a choice. Love is how we treat people.
- So long as we bow down to fleshly lusts in the Outer Court, we cannot enter the Holy Place where the presence of God dwells. Therefore, self discipline (self control) is the single more important virtue in a person's life. Without it, we are helpless before the tyranny of our feelings and moods. There are two kinds of pain in life, and we get to choose between them: (1) the pain of self discipline, or (2) the pain of regret.
- Genesis says that God created man to have dominion over all the earth. Man is not supposed to be dominated by other men or by anything on this earth. But there are many men who are dominated by a little leaf from Colombia. Or by a leaf from Cuba. Or by a handful of fermented grain.

CIRCUMCISE YOUR HEART

God entered into a covenant with Abraham, and the sign of that covenant was that he and *"every male among you"* were to be circumcised. Boys were to have this done when they were eight days old. (Gen. 17:10)

Moses told the Hebrews that this act was to be the physical sign of an inward reality - they were to circumcise their hearts and repent of their stiff necks. (Dt. 10:16) Colossians 2 connects circumcision to the cross and our dying to our old nature.

Some years ago when my sweet Doris was still with me and we were living in Loveland, we became acquainted with a dear couple in Ft. Collins. They were going through the fire of testing. The wife, Bev, was a nurse at the big hospital there. She told us that she always assumed that circumcision was a quick, painless procedure. One day a team was performing this operation on a little boy and she decided to watch them. She slipped into the room and was shocked at what she saw. Without any anesthetic the doctor started cutting the foreskin with a pair of scissors. The infant screamed, sobbed, flailed, lost his breath. Bev said that tears ran down her face as the procedure went on and on. God initiated this practice! Our friends felt that they better understood how painful it is to cut away the flesh of our fallen nature.

Many assume that the circumcision of the heart is a painless procedure. I just got acquainted with a mature couple who are going through an interminable season of suffering. Every aspect of their lives has been touched: their children, finances, health, and friendships. They understand the process, the purpose behind it. But at times the agony is so terrible that they become confused and disoriented. They weren't given any anesthesia and refuse to anesthetize themselves. (Even as Jesus refused to accept the alcohol and drugs that were proffered to Him at the cross.)

If the purpose of Christianity is to make us comfortable, none of this makes sense. If the purpose is to make us Christlike, then it takes some painful surgery. God never did explain to Job why he was going through such an ordeal. All He ever really implied to Job was, "Trust Me."

Perhaps someone needs to receive this encouragement today. James says to "*Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials,*" for God is in it with His sharp scissors. Our condition is far more desperate than we imagine, and God's love is far more extreme. Trust Him.

IN THE CALDRON OF ANGER AND **CONTEMPT**

(Dallas Willard is a professor at U.S.C.'s School of Philosophy. He has amazing insights into the Word of God and its relevance in our daily lives. When I read his books, I feel like Bozo the Clown admiring the work of Albert Einstein. The following is taken from Mr. Willard's book, The Divine Conspiracy. I have shortened and paraphrased some of his statements.)

When we trace wrongdoing back to its roots in the human heart, we find that in most cases it involves some form of anger. Close beside anger you will find its twin brother, contempt. Jesus says, "*But what I say is that anyone who becomes intensely angry (orgizomenos) with those around them shall stand condemned before the law.*" (Mt. 5:22) Why such a strong statement? Anger is in its own right - quite apart from "acting it out"- an injury to others. When I discover your anger at me, I am already wounded. Your anger alone will very likely be enough to stop me or make me change my course, and it will also raise the stress level of everyone around us. It may also evoke my anger in return. Usually it does, because your anger places a restraint on me. It crosses my will. Thus anger feeds on anger.

Consequently, we would not normally choose to have others angry at us. We know that people who are angry at us will our harm, and by just their look (or refusal to look) or the raising of their voice (or not speaking at all) they intend to make a painful impression on us, and they succeed.

But there is another aspect of the will in anger that makes it so deadly. We can and usually do choose or will *to be* angry. Anger first arises spontaneously, but we can actively welcome it and decide to indulge it, and we usually do. We may even become an angry person, and any incident can evoke from us a torrent of rage that is kept in constant readiness. This is the case with those who are caught up in "road rage." The explosion of anger never simply comes from the incident. Most people carry a supply of anger around with them.

But why would people embrace anger and indulge it? Why would they bloat their bodies with anger or wear it like a badge of honor while it radiates real harm to others and to their own health and happiness? It is well established today that many people are killed by their own anger, and many others die of secondhand anger, like secondhand smoke.

The answer is that anger indulged always has in it an element of self-righteousness and vanity and wounded ego. The

importance of the self and the real or imaginary wound done to it is blown out of all proportion by those who indulge anger. I may become addicted to the adrenaline rush and never feel really alive except when my anger is pumping. Only this element of self-righteousness can support me as I retain my anger long after the occasion of it or allow its intensity to heat to the point of totally senseless rage. Anger embraced is, accordingly, inherently disintegrative of human personality and life. It does not have to be "acted out" to poison the world. Because of the way it seizes upon the body and its environment just by being there, it cannot be hidden. Energy is dedicated to keeping the anger alive: we constantly remind ourselves of how wrongly we have been treated.

In the United States there are around 25,000 murders each year. There are 1,000 murders in the workplace, and a million people are injured in the workplace by violent attacks from co-workers. Most workplace murders occur after long periods of open rage and threats, and many involve multiple murders of innocent bystanders.

Contempt is Worse than Anger

Contempt is a greater evil than anger and so is deserving of greater condemnation because it is a kind of studied degradation of another. Jesus tells us, "*Whoever says 'Raca' to his brother shall stand condemned before the Sanhedrin, the highest court in the land*" (Mt. 5:22) The word *raca* was current in Jesus' day to express contempt for someone. It may have originated from the sound one makes to collect spittle from the throat in order to spit. Contempt is to deny someone's worth. Today we would not say *raca*, but we might call someone a twerp, dork, or nerd. These are the gentler words in our vocabulary of contempt. When it really gets going, it becomes filthy. Our verbal arsenal is loaded with contemptuous terms, some with sexual, racial, or cultural bearing, others just personally degrading. The intent and effect of contempt is always to exclude someone, push them away, leave them out and isolated. We may see it expressed at a party, in the office, home or church sanctuary!

In family battles the progression is nearly always from anger to contempt (always expressed in vile language) to physical brutality. Once contempt is established, however, it justifies the initial anger and increases its force. Recently cultural observers have noted the overwhelming rise in the use of filthy language, especially among young people. Strangely, few have been able to find any grounds for condemning it. Can it be that they actually find contempt acceptable, or are unable to recognize it? Filthy language and name calling is always an expression of contempt. Some attention has recently been paid to twelve- or fourteen-year-old children who kill people for no apparent reason. But when you observe them accurately, you will see that they are indeed actuated by a feeling. Watch their faces. It is contempt. They are contemptuous of others - and at the same time enraged at being dissed or disrespected, which is their language of contempt.

Jesus notes one stage further in the progression starting with anger: "*And whoever says 'You fool!' shall merit condemnation to the fires of gehenna.*" (Mt. 5:22) Actually, that word no longer captures the sense of Jesus' teaching here. Excuse the crudity, but the nearest equivalent of the biblical fool in today's language would be something more like *stupid bastard* or *f--- jerk*. To brand someone "fool" in this biblical sense was a violation of the soul so devastating, of such great harm, that, as Jesus saw, it would justify consigning the offender to the smoldering garbage dump of human existence. It is not possible for people with such attitudes toward others (the extreme opposite of the agape love that is the essence of God's nature and to which we aspire) to live in the movements of God's kingdom.

We must recognize that Jesus is not here giving us a new list of laws, "Thou shalt not express anger or contempt to others." He is taking us deeper into the kind of being we are, the kind of love God has for us and that brings us into harmony with his life. He is pointing out, as was expressed by Paul, that "He that loves has fulfilled the law." He is leading us to a relationship with the Father far above a law to the source of actions, good and bad. He is enabling us, by His example and by His death on a cross, to be the kind of people who love with His quality of love.

A SENSE OF HUMOR

(I don't remember where I found this quote, but I agree with it wholeheartedly.)

Humorlessness is hostile to health and happiness. Totalitarian systems are notably devoid of humor at any level. Laughter, which brings acceptance and freedom, is a threat to their rule. It is difficult to oppress people who have a good sense of humor. Beware the humorless, whether in the form of a person, institution or belief system, for it is always accompanied by the impulse to control and dominate even if its proclaimed objective is to create prosperity or peace.

MINISTRY

- Jim Schnell and I had a good weekend on Aug. 20-21 holding a seminar at the Delta Correctional Facility. We saw people healed spiritually, emotionally and physically. I prayed with a young man whose mother had stolen all the money

he had sent home for safe-keeping while he was serving in Iraq. He said he thought about her day and night and wanted to kill her. By God's grace I led him to forgive her, and also cast out a spirit of anger and murder. He felt it go. PTL!

- Lynne Cumming, Fred Feller, and I leave on Sep. 6 for two weeks in northern Minnesota and southern Canada ministering in house churches and small churches. Lynne was born and raised in that area and we received an invitation from pastors she knows there. We feel that God wants to do something different as we teach and minister together, and we are excited to see what He is going to do! Please pray for us.

Glenn

Web-site: www.glennbrownministries.com

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