

Anger

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty”

Proverbs 16:32

Anger—The Hebrew root is *anep*. Behind this is the word *ap*, a word that describes the nostrils in breathing. This part of the body is important in Hebrew thought. Remember that God breathe life into Adam through the nostrils. Because the nose is part of the context of breathing, it is considered vital to life. *Ap* is also used to express the idea of anger. Flared nostrils are a sign of emotional disturbance. This sign is metaphorically attributed to God’s anger. Sin causes God’s anger to flare since sin is a violation and an affront to His love and holiness.

Proverbs paints a wonderful image of God’s decision to withhold His anger. This Hebrew phrase gives us an image of God taking in a long, deep breath through the nose before letting out His wrath. God breathes deeply, letting his anger pass. God counts to ten. He considers our guilt and decides to wait before releasing His punishment. Because God delays His judgment, we are called to do the same thing. Just as we have been given a reprieve, we are to restrain our anger toward others.

This verse in Proverbs directs attention to the personal quality that models God’s character. Those of us who know God’s grace, who have experienced what it means to have God withhold His anger, should show this behavior in our actions toward others. We have every reason to do so, for we have been forgiven.

My wife and I have struggled recently over issues with children. I doubt we are the exception to the rule. Most parents I know find that the stress of child raising often brings parents to that rough edge of anger. But God is reminding me that my anger accomplishes nothing. He knew my sins and still He delayed in order to allow me time to repent and come back to Him. I am eternally grateful for His grace. Why do I have such a hard time extending the same grace toward those who are so close to me? It is so easy for me to forget the price of redemption. I focus on “not fair” instead of remembering what it cost for me to be set free. God teaches by example. He waited for me. I must learn to wait, too.

“Father, forgive me for rushing to judgment in my own cause. I run right by your lesson in my life. Help me to be a man of discernment, slow to anger and ready to overlook a transgression. Let me model my Savior who waited for me from all eternity.”