

# *Proverbs - The Discreet man*

*Ray Ewers*

**E**veryone in a family is capable of committing the sin of anger. When we lose our temper we lose many other things with it including our reputation, our joy, and our health. A charming likeable person can suddenly be overcome with rage and be transformed to become more like a beast than a civilized man.

Is it any wonder that God commands us to *“Cease from anger and forsake wrath”* (Psalm 37:8). Eighteen verses in Proverbs relate to anger and wrath. Jesus warned us that an angry person is in danger of judgment; and several times in the Epistles we are told to *“Put away anger”*.

I was helping a young man troubled by his temper and I gave him this verse Proverbs 19:11 to meditate on: *“The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.”* I wanted him to restrain his anger, to restrain the sudden impulse to react; so that there is a brief interval between the feeling within and the expression without. The split second allows time to weigh up the consequences, to reflect upon what God says, and allow the Holy Spirit to control our spirit. This man is now living in victory and looks back with thanksgiving for this verse which God gave him as a way of escape.

It may be a healthy exercise to examine ourselves in this area of our conduct. Do I easily lose my temper and quickly become angry? Do I brood over a situation with a strong stoney silence? Do I find that angry feelings persist and linger? Do I take matters into my own hand to justify myself? Keep in mind that anger arises from a variety of circumstances. We can easily react to what another says or does and feel mistreated. Often times it is because we do not get our own way. It may be that our anger is a reaction to another's anger. Is this the fault of the other person? No, the Bible says the cause really lies within our heart, and is the expression of the subtle sins of pride and self-centredness. Jesus said:

*“That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from*

*within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”* (Mark 7:20-23).

It is of no help to us to excuse ourselves and say that this is just the way I am. Deep down inside, our conscience tells us that to be angry is sin.

*“The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression”* (Prov. 19:11). There remains a haunting fear that when we lose our temper we are disobeying the command to *“Grieve not the Holy Spirit”*. We are not surprised that in the context of this command in Ephesians 4:30 the Bible says:

*“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Eph.4:31-32).

James understood what it means to defer anger when he instructed us *“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (anger)”*(James 1:19).

Proverbs assures us that the benefits of discretion and deferment are many. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding for *“A soft answer turneth away wrath”* (Prov.15:1). To be slow to anger is to appease strife (Proverbs 15:18), and *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city”* (Prov. 16:32).

What an encouragement to pray *“Lord, give me the discretion to defer my anger and know the glory of passing over a transgression.”* You may not think you have a problem in this area, but God warns us: *“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1Cor.10:12). So let us humble ourselves and pray for a spirit of discernment, that we too might learn discretion and defer any angry feeling.