

## Opening Words

Anger – can we ever get control of this area? Being a man of justice – can God make us this way? Can we really have a good reputation with those who do not know Christ? Can we be men who are above reproach in our relationships?

## 12 Living Above Reproach – Not Quick Tempered, Just, A Good Reputation

Today we conclude the topic of being above reproach in the public arena. This will give us a full-orbed view of the kind of man God wants us to be, a man above reproach at home, i.e., he is leading his family spiritually. He is above reproach in private – he is leading himself spiritually in those moments when he is alone. He is above reproach in public, i.e., in his dealings with people. This is the area we have been covering the past two days, above reproach in public. A man must be able to teach others in the ways of God, he must be gentle, and he must not be pugnacious, contentious, or self-willed. We have three more to look at today. A man must not be quick-tempered. He must be just, and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church. Let's get right to it.

Men, we cannot be quick tempered. For some that is easier. Some have a calm demeanor and don't really have much of a problem with anger. Others though, struggle with it, and while we know that anger is not always a sin, anger is just one letter short of danger, and if we do not control our anger our anger will control us and will cause great damage in the lives of those around us.

What is anger? One dictionary says it is a feeling of sudden and strong displeasure and antagonism against an assumed wrong or injury. And the assumed wrong or injury may not be assumed only. It may be a real wrong or injury done to us to which we normally react in anger. But, but! Sometimes what we think is a wrong is not always a wrong and Paul warns against being quick-tempered. These are men whose usual way of reacting to a problem, a difficulty, or a wrong is with sudden and strong displeasure and antagonism. And they only make the problem worse.

I think we know the familiar verse where Jesus said, "It's not good enough to say you haven't murdered someone when you are expressing terrible anger towards others and you call them terrible things. That kind of anger will get you in big trouble with God." Paul said in Ephesians 4:31, "let anger be put away from you." And James, in one of the most famous passages said, "Be slow to anger because anger does not promote the righteous cause of God."

So, what kind of man do we want to be? Do we want to be a quick-tempered man who makes things worse or do we want to be the kind of man who is able to solve problems by getting to the issues at hand or the root problems in a person's life? And this gives us a clue on how to overcome anger. Ask God to help you not react to surface issues but help you become a problem solver. Ask him to show you the root causes or the real issues of situations that cause you to explode in anger. One of the prophecies of the Messiah is Isaiah 11:3 which says that "He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay." We need to be like him!

But we must not only get to the root problems in situations or with people that cause us anger. We must go deeper. We must get to the root problem of why we are angry in the first place. Anger usually comes from unresolved issues in our hearts. Perhaps it is because someone has sinned against us and we have not forgiven them. Perhaps it is because we did not get our way, and we wanted to have our way, and we did not yield that area to the Lord.

If we have such unresolved issues in our lives, such as bitterness or being self-willed, we will find them turning into anger. Let God speak to you and bring healing to these inner wounds and sins of the heart. One of my favorite passages is from Psalm 139:23-24 which says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.” I love that phrase, “hurtful way.” All of us have ways of living that are hurtful to us and to others. Being a quick-tempered man is a hurtful way.

Let’s ask some questions about this area.

1. Do I react quickly and form immediate judgments on what I see and hear, or do I look for root causes of problems?
2. Do I get easily frustrated, or am I learning to be patient with people and circumstances?
3. Do I focus on problems and their effects, or do focus on causes and solutions?
4. Do I practice the opposite of anger – forbearance, gentleness, patience, peaceableness, and self-control?

Great, piercing questions! May God give you grace as you as you think on them in his presence.

Our final two areas are positive. Paul has used several phrases and words to talk about what we should not be like, but we end the public area by talking about what we should be. One of these is that we should be just.

What does a just man look like in the New Testament? We have several examples of people who acted with justice. In Matthew 1:19, Joseph was innocently going to divorce Mary because he thought she had been unfaithful to him. He could have made a big scene. He could have called for her to be stoned. But he was quietly going to have her sent away, and Matthew says he was doing it this way because he was a just man.

The parents of John the Baptist were said to be just or righteous in the sight of God walking blamelessly in the commands and requirements of the Law. Simeon was this way. He was the old man to whom God said that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Luke describes him as a just and devout man.

In Philippians 4:8 we are told to meditate upon many things and one of them is that we should meditate upon that which is right or just. In Colossians 4:1, masters were told to treat their servants with justice. Of course, that idea would light a fuse that would lead one day to the abolition of slavery. Finally, James 5:16 gives a tremendous promise for those who live this way. Listen to these words: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

Let's ask some questions now and see if we are men who are just.

1. Am I fair, even-handed, and impartial in my judgments?
2. Do I subscribe to high moral and ethical standards?
3. Am I just before God through faith?
4. Do I mourn over the sin and injustice that is around me?

Finally, we have one more area to help us understand what it means to be a man who is above reproach. We must be men who have a good reputation with those outside the church. What is a reputation? A reputation is the general estimation that people have about you. What do people normally think about you? While we don't want to be captivated by the opinions of others, we should want others to think accurately about us. The Greek word for reputation is most often translated *witness*. We want to be a good witness for the Lord. You know, we can attend church and fool people by our good behavior once a week for an hour but what do our co-workers think about us? Do we have a good reputation with them? What do our family members think about us? How about our neighbors?

We find many New Testament examples of men who had a good reputation. Remember Cornelius in Acts 10, a Roman centurion who loved the God of Israel. It was said of him that he was devout. That's a good reputation. In Acts 16:2 we find that the churches of Galatia spoke very highly of a young man named Timothy. We know what happened then! He became Paul's right hand man. In 3 John 1:12 we find John talking about a man named Demetrius who had a good reputation with others, with God, and with John himself.

It is imperative that we be men of good reputation because Paul says if we are not, the devil will exploit our weakness, that area we are hiding and we will lose our good reputation and bring shame upon the name of the Lord and ourselves.

Let's ask ourselves some questions to see if we are men of good reputation with those who do not know Christ.

1. Do I have a good testimony with my friends and acquaintances who are not in the church or who are not saved?
2. Does my speech honor the Lord or do people hear me grumbling and complaining? Listen to these words from Philippians 2:14-16: "Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless."
3. Do I have a good reputation in my business affairs? Listen to Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12: "Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not Christians will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others."
4. Do I keep my behavior excellent, even when I am falsely accused? Listen to 1 Peter 2:12: "Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of

doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.”

So, there it is men, and everyone. Overcoming anger, being just, and maintaining a good reputation completes the eight qualities Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 that pertain to being above reproach in public. May God give all of us grace to be this way for his glory in a world that so much needs to see and hear the true God in his people.