

Disciplining Anger

Proverbs 19:18-20

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Some things which "burst forth", or "erupt" and disturb an otherwise quiet, peaceful surrounding are always welcome. The sun bursts through ominous clouds, punctuating a dark, dreary day with splashes of golden light. A young child's smile can burst through tears when least expected.

But, we have all experienced another kind of "bursting forth", unpleasant and embarrassing and even destructive. Maybe it starts with a glare. A rash statement. Then a blow. Ranting and raving and swash buckling through the house demanding rights, giving no quarter. Anger. Uncontrolled anger. Oh, how it can burst forth unexpectedly and spoil an otherwise peaceful, productive scene!

On this subject, Proverbs 19:18-20 says:

"Discipline your son while there is hope.
And do not desire his death.
A man of great anger shall bear the penalty,
For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.
Listen to counsel and accept discipline,
That you may be wise the rest of your days."

Many a young man's anger has gone unchecked. Wronged pride, damaged ego and tarnished ideals all, in a youthful moment, seem legitimate reasons to express anger. And so, it bursts forth.

What is more normal than a young man, or woman, showing anger over being cut from the ball team or from the school play? Being slighted by the "popular" kids, being made to cut the grass or wash the dishes or not being allowed to watch a favorite TV program all may give rise to uncontrolled anger. What terrible disappointments! "Let it out! Don't bottle it up!" So says human wisdom, but the Bible clearly condemns letting it out. Read Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 12:16; 16:32; 19:11; 25:28.

Our text in Proverbs 19 is evidently speaking of uncontrolled anger. The "great anger" of verse 19 is anger, which is sinful. It is anger, which is unchecked, which has been allowed to develop out of an undisciplined life. While there is a righteous anger, this kind of anger is always sinful and there is always a penalty to be paid.

Solomon's advice is that parents teach children self-discipline while they are still young, while there is still hope.