1 Corinthians 13:5 – "Love…Is Not Easily Angered"
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Today we're continuing our summer message series based on what is sometimes called "The Great Love Chapter of the Bible," 1 Corinthians 13. Today we're looking at the phrase in 1 Corinthians 13:5, **"Love…is not easily angered."**

Anger is an often misunderstood emotion. The way the thinking goes is that it's *always* wrong to get angry. However, nowhere in the Bible does God ever say, "Don't ever get angry." But God does say, as we heard in our Verse of the Day, **"In your anger do not sin"** (Ephesians 4:26). The question then becomes, "How does one manage one's anger so that when one becomes angry one is not sinning; or that when one is angry that does not lead to sin?"

1 Corinthians 13:5 helps us. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says, **"Love…is not *easily* angered."** Another way to say (translate) what this verse is saying is that love is not "*easily* irritated" or "*easily* provoked." Love does not have a "thin skin," as the saying goes. Love is not overly sensitive to getting upset by what someone says or does. One Bible commentator—in commenting on the meaning of this verse—said it this way, **"Love is not embittered or enraged by abuse, wrong, insult, or injury. Love treats others with kindness and consideration but receives much of the opposite."[1]**

We see, then, that what 1 Corinthians 13:5 is talking about is what we might call "anger management." How do we manage anger so that, in anger, we don't sin?

All of us are born with anger. Galatians chapter 5 lists anger as one of the acts that comes from our sinful natures. Again, all of us are born with anger…and we need to learn how to manage anger. Some of us here today have learned that. Some of us haven't. Some of us are in the process of learning how to control our anger rather than our anger controlling us. Letting our anger control us is a choice that we make. Anger can be managed.

We're going to play a bit of a game this morning. One sees this played in the world of psychology—as well as one sees it going on in the Bible. It's where a person is asked, "If you were an animal, what animal would you be?" I know we don't ever find that question in the Bible, but we do find the Bible comparing us to various animals from time-to-time, don't we? For example, the Bible tells us Jesus is our Good Shepherd and calls us "sheep" of the Good Shepherd (John 10). Jesus called the Pharisees **"snakes"**—a **"brood of vipers"** (Matthew 23:33). And Jesus told us to be **"innocent as doves"** (Matthew 10:16).

So…to what animal would you compare yourself? If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

I say to you this morning that when it comes to the anger with which we're born according to our sinful natures, we're either "turtles" or "skunks." All of us are born with anger. It's part of our sinful human natures. When we get angry we're either like turtles and pull our heads in and "clam up." We don't say anything. We may be what's called "passive-aggressive." We pretend like we're not angry; that whatever the person or situation is…is not bothering us—but then we release our anger in some other way…usually a way that's not so good. Or, we're like a skunk. When we become angry we stink up the place because everybody knows we're angry! We explode! We yell! It's not a pretty thing to see.

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[1] R.C.H. Lenski's *The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians*

Why do we get angry? We get angry for three reasons: when we're hurt, frustrated, or scared. We see examples of these in the Bible and in our lives.

- Why did Cain kill Abel; that account that we heard in our Old Testament reading for today? Why did Martha get upset with Jesus at the death of her brother, Lazarus, and say to Jesus, **"Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died?"** (John 11:21). Cain was hurt emotionally because the Lord didn't accept his offering as he accepted Cain's. Martha was hurting emotionally because her brother had just died and she thought that if Jesus would have just hurried along a little bit and arrived in Bethany a little bit earlier he could have kept her brother from dying. When we get hurt…be it physically if we whack of finger with a hammer…or emotionally if someone does something or says something that hurts us…we may become angry.

- We get angry when we get frustrated. In the Bible we could say that God's anger at people is on account of his frustration over people not following his will and being hard-hearted towards accepting him and his will. We may become angry on account frustration over people not following God's commands, not following a certain set of rules, guidelines, or regulations, or at something like society's general disregard for God or morality. That kind of anger is sometimes referred to as "righteous anger" because it's anger at the things God would be angry at…and really, wants us to not be accepting of either. It should be upsetting to us when people misuse God's name, ignore his Word and commands, and trample all over what he says is "right" and "wrong." God doesn't want us to just ignore such things or be apathetic towards them. But the key for us in these things is how, in our anger, we don't sin. Somebody may not worship the same God we do, but that doesn't give us the right to murder them. Somebody may misuse the name of God but that doesn't mean we need to go punch them in the mouth to get them to stop saying whatever they're saying. Then we would be guilty of sin as well. In our anger we would be sinning.

- One more reason that we get angry…is when we are afraid. That what happened with Jesus' disciples on the Sea of Galilee. A storm came up. The disciples thought they were going to die. Jesus was in the back of the boat sleeping. The disciples wake Jesus and ask him, **"Teacher, don't you care if we all drown?"** (Mark 4:38). Why did the disciples accuse Jesus of not caring about them? They were afraid. Their fear got the best of them and they became angry with Jesus for not doing something to help them. Here he was just taking a nap!

"Managed anger" is loving. That's what God has done—and continues to do—over his anger with the sin of humankind. God did not "clam up" over sin and do nothing. Nor did God "blow up" and in a rage punish everyone on the spot. Instead, God sent Jesus, our Savior from sin and condemnation. Romans 5:6-8 says, **"At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**

God took his anger over sin—your sin and my sin—and he put it on Jesus. He put it on Jesus—on the cross. There, on the cross, Jesus suffered the anger of God—the wrath of God—for us. Jesus went through this so that we don't have to.

What does this mean for you and me? It means that God is not angry with us over our sin. It means that God is not going to punish us when we die for our sins. It means our sins are forgiven. It means there is peace between God and us. It means that when we die we get to go to heaven!

This "good news" of what Jesus has done for us lifts us up! It encourages us! It empowers us to want to love others in the same way God has loved us…with a 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love…with a love that is not easily angered.

To close out my words to you this morning, I'm going to end with what I'm calling "The 3 R's of Loving Anger Management." Perhaps you've heard of "The 3 R's of Education—Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic." These are "The 3 R's of Loving Anger Management": Release, Re-pattern, and Rely.

As we are empowered by Jesus to lovingly manage anger…we

Release anger appropriately:
- That means we don't suppress it. We don't store it up inside. As I mentioned earlier, if we do that, ugly things can happen. Anger might be building inside us and turning into bitterness or rage. Then, all of a sudden…boom! The anger explodes from us in some nasty way!
- That means we don't repress anger. We don't deny it's there; that it exists; that it's real.
- That means we don't express it in term of hollering and yelling. But rather, we express the anger…we confess the anger to God…we turn the anger over to God and entrust him to deal with it. We say, "God, I'm angry with…" "God, I'm angry at…" and we let God deal with it. This is an act of faith.

Re-pattern thinking regarding anger:

Here are a couple Bible passages that speak to us about this:

Proverbs 22:24-25 says, **"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared."** If we hang around people who don't manage anger well, we're going to start thinking, "Hey, this is how one's supposed to handle anger. It's OK for me to deny it. It's OK for me to suppress it. It's OK for me to explode when I'm angry."

Consider what God says in James 1:19-20, **"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."** That's what thinking about anger that's been re-patterned anger looks like.

And finally, lovingly managing anger means…

Relying on God's help. We can't do this alone. If we try, we'll find ourselves just failing again, and again, and again. Let's give our anger over to God. God desires to help us lovingly manage our anger. Amen.