

Anger Leadership And Love

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 June 1991

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] There are three prayers there which we pray for those who are about to be baptized, but I want us to pray for all of us as we are met together this morning.

And so I'll read the prayer and ask you to say the Amen at the end of each of these three petitions. O Lord of hosts, before the might of whose presence the armies of evil are put to flight, deliver thy servants from the power of Satan.

Cast out of our hearts every evil imagination, everything which exalts itself against the knowledge of thee, bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

And grant that we may have power and strength to have victory and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Please be seated.

Somebody sent us a note this week saying that St. John's was being subject to special attack by Satan. And by and large, I didn't think that was unusual.

[1 : 23] But it is persistent, and we need to be very much aware of it. And that's why I want you to look at Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10 to 12, really.

And I'm not sure where this is found in your prayer book or your Bible. But if you find out, you could tell me, and I'll tell everybody else.

Here we are. Page 184 in the New Testament section. And familiar words, and you've just heard them read to you, but I read them to you again.

Finally, that means as an ongoing condition, day after day. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are... And the wiles, somebody said, may sound like tricks, but it's a settled strategy of the devil that we may be able to stand against that.

[2 : 41] We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of the present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Therefore, take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Now, what I want you to think about for a moment is getting angry.

One of the great surprising things of growing to the great age that I've come to, and if anybody asks me if I'm going to retire, I'm going to hit them, so be careful.

I... It's quite an unacceptable question to me, and it makes me angry, so... The...

But the thing I find is that at this great age, you get angry. Oh, you get angry. And the trouble is that you can't do anything about it.

[3 : 52] You know, you're just a bag of wind anyway, and a bag of bones. And so the anger...

Being angry is just like popping a paper bag or a balloon. It doesn't do anything except destroy you. So...

But it's still true. And I was greatly helped by Fitzsimmons Allison, who said, Unrelieved anger is the price we pay for being civilized.

That is, our civilization is such and is so ordered and so peaceful and behavior is so well modeled for us that the fact that you're angry is something which is created by the very high level of civilization that you live in.

You can't go out and hit anybody. You can't drive your fist through the wall of somebody else's apartment that you're living in. You can't do any of these things, and that's part of the price, so that this latent anger is something that gets hold of us.

There are fewer and fewer targets for your anger. And so you end up a miserable old man, angry at everything and unable to do anything about it except destroy yourself from inside.

[5 : 08] Now, he also points out that sports are one way in which we try and publicly vent our anger. You know, we can watch some Sunday school superintendent from Tennessee beat up on a Sunday school superintendent from New York City and all delight in it and pay them millions of dollars because it relieves a lot of our anger.

Wasn't that what happened recently? Well, these boxing matches, being angry at everybody who's angry with the Canucks or angry with everybody who's angry at the BC Lions or something like that, it's all very helpful.

And the thing that really struck me, and this is by way of confession for which I need absolution, but I was just fascinated by the Gulf War and watching this terrible venting of anger.

Not the frustration of diplomacy or endless negotiation or any of those things, but suddenly the bombs were flying and everything was going and you could see this anger venting itself and you could sort of feel a great sense of relief.

And we're told that during time of war, very few people commit suicide. You know, because they have an enemy. They have an object on which they can vent their anger.

[6 : 29] Marriage is sometimes used for that too. And that's the way it's understood by lots of people. And needless to say, the church very often becomes the flashpoint for your anger.

You know, I can sit here Sunday after Sunday or stand here Sunday after Sunday watching anger build in that person over there and a couple in the back row there and a few over there and then some over there.

And I know that before the week's out, I'm going to have to duck submissively because somebody's anger has been aroused. And that's not unnatural.

It happens and it's got to find expression. Well, people are very grateful when someone can identify the enemy.

So when Demetrius the silversmith with the economy in a bad way and the silversmith's work wasn't in demand, people weren't buying, consumers weren't consuming, and Demetrius suddenly found out why.

[7 : 39] And he said, it's Paul's preaching that's doing this. He's undermining our business. We must protest. And he had all the city out venting their anger.

Remember, great is Diana of the Ephesians and on and on they shouted and they gathered and they looked for somebody they could vent their anger on and poor old Alexander got up to defend himself and got beaten up for his trouble.

Paul was told not to go and see them even though he would have loved to but so that he wouldn't become. And the only thing that quelled that was when the town clerk came along and said, you think they're bad, you want to see what the Roman soldiers are going to do if you don't behave. Back home. Batten down your anger and go home. And that's what they did. And so you see that this business of anger is something that you need to look at.

Now when you look at Ephesians 6, verse 12, it says that this is the rightful objective of our anger.

[8 : 47] He says it's not flesh and blood that it's not that person or that person or that person or this person. You're barking up the wrong tree if you think it's somebody and you try and do that.

He said the thing that is the rightful source or the rightful object of our anger is principalities, powers, the world rulers of this present darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. So Paul tells us we have a right to be angry and an object for our anger, a war in which we are to be engaged. There is a war.

There is a perpetual spiritual warfare that goes on that if you profess the name of Christ, you are involved in that war.

Now you will know during the recent desert storm, the general whose name I can't pronounce was a great hero. George Bush was a great hero.

[9 : 57] John Major was a great hero. Brian Mulroney almost got there. And not least among the heroes was Saddam Hussein, whose people suffered enormously because of the Satan that was attacking.

It was interesting because I talked to my friend at the university to give him authority for what he says.

He's a professor. And he said, a jihad, that is a holy war, is really a spiritual warfare. And that they are deliberately misinterpreting the Koran when they say that the spiritual warfare is against a flesh and blood enemy or is against a territory or a political power.

They say the true jihad is the spiritual warfare. Interesting, eh? How that's been misinterpreted. But we do the same thing. So, what we've got is Paul saying we have a right to be angry and we have a leader.

Because leaders enjoy being, you know, they enjoy leadership when they have a defined enemy and they're leading everybody against it.

[11 : 24] Then it's good to be a leader. And you see, what this means is that Jesus is the one to whom we are to be subject because he is leading us in a battle against the ultimate enemy which is described as the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of the present darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Jesus is the leader and we are to be subject to him because we are engaged in the battle. He is the only one that is defying the dark satanic empire, the spiritual empire of Satan.

Now, the reason that it says that our war, we wrestle not against, we, the hand-to-hand battle that we're all engaged in, and John Stott says that the reason it says wrestle is because it's not a regiment going against a regiment, it's each of us involved in the struggle in wrestling.

And, so, Jesus is leading us. Now, what he has done for us is this. He has broken down the partitions that exist between people.

So, there ultimately is no resolution to men fighting women or women fighting men, to slaves fighting masters or masters fighting slaves.

[12 : 52] There is no, there is no future to Greeks and Jews fighting.

There isn't any, Jesus has broken down the partition so that all of us are made one in Christ. And it doesn't matter what your ethnic origin or what your language is, we are all the object of the love of God in Christ.

We are all those for whom Christ has died. So, our enmity is not to be towards people, not against flesh and blood, but we are all engaged, Paul says, in this ultimate struggle.

Jesus says you are required to love your enemies. Why does he say that? Because, I think he means you're mistaken about who your real enemy is.

And you often identify as your enemy the wrong person. And the very person against whom you're, who is your foe, your enemy, is the wrong person.

[14 : 02] And you're fighting the wrong battle. the relationship you should have to that person is to love that person. Even though it's difficult at times.

But Jesus says that's what's to happen. And, uh, that, uh, our war is not against them.

Uh, you're inquired, you're required to love your enemies. You're required under Christ to be subject to one another. that is because we're all engaged in the same battle.

And if we're going to fight with one another, there's a battle we're not going to fight. Which is the important battle that needs to be fought. And that is, in a sense, the logic behind Paul saying to us, you are to be subject one to another out of reverence for Christ because he's leading the battle, which is the life and death struggle in which you are engaged, in which is a spiritual battle.

Christ has been exalted and he is leading the battle and you can read about it in Ephesians. Look at Ephesians chapter 1 and look at, uh, verse 19 of, of chapter 1 and you see this tremendous picture of the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

[15 : 25] Read it with me, then it'll, I hope, burn itself on your mind that you may have this glorious picture of the exalted person of Jesus Christ in your mind and heart.

Together, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe? According to the working of his great might, which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in heavenly places.

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

And he has put all things under his feet, has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who filled all in.

So that, you know, it's interesting, isn't it? If you see Jesus Christ crucified, he is the one against whom we have vented our anger.

[16 : 35] He was the wrong one, wasn't he? But he told us who we are by standing before us and submitting to death on the cross so that we'd be able to identify the depths of our human anger.

Our human anger ultimately expressed itself in crucifying Jesus Christ. Now, he says, that one whom you have killed, God has raised to be your leader.

And now, instead of humiliating him on a cross, you are to become humble, you are to become subject to him and follow him in the struggle that he is leading.

he is the one to whom you must be subject. And the enemy is the devil. And you see, what, underlying this, I mean, I want just to remind you that when, one thing that I've rather covered over too lightly, when it talks about principalities, powers, the rulers of this present darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places, Paul apparently says that as though everybody understood what he was talking about.

And the difficulty with our particular generation is we don't understand what he's talking about. Aren't we all nice people? Aren't we all good people? Don't we all live in a good city? Don't we all behave? Aren't we all fine, moral, upstanding people?

[18:03] Surely we are. There's nothing wrong with us. Well, they understood differently. They understood that there was a powerful, spiritual reality to evil and that evil would ultimately triumph.

I can't resist this one illustration. The front page of the province this morning talks about old people's homes which are dirty holes, so to speak. I went to one this week, Yeovil, which is run by the grey nuns from Montreal and I had a communion service which Ernie normally takes and there was about 15 very elderly women there and they didn't take part with any great enthusiasm but they obviously did but they were very devoted and that meant a lot to them.

And one of them who sat totally expressionless through the whole of the service living in an old people's home in Vancouver and the service was over I went and met her the sister introduced me to her and her name was Mrs. Thomas and she said Mr. Robinson we are treated like queens in this place and she went on to say what a lovely place it was and how beautifully they were treated. Now I think what the province is doing is letting Satan get a foothold. what we really need to do is find out about Mrs. Thomas and the people who are fighting the spiritual warfare and are recognizing the grace and goodness and love that they're shown.

It was just an interesting thing. Anyway I lost my place and probably lost you but that was just an illustration which I wanted to share with you. So we have a right to be angry the object of our anger is the enemy in a war in which we are to be engaged.

[20:10] Well Jacques Ellul in his book called Apocalypse and in speaking about Revelations 12 verses 7 to 12 tells us how our enemy works.

Our enemy and I don't want you to carry any illusions of this into the business world but our enemy is a takeover expert. You can build schools, hospitals, churches and all sorts of valuable institutions for society and along comes the enemy and takes over.

He never builds any of those things but he sure can take them over. He's a takeover expert and to see how he works because Ellul talks about Revelations 12 verses 7 to 12 and in order that you know what I'm talking about I want you to turn to Revelations 12 and read with me verses 7 to 12 because it is the description I suppose in the whole of the New Testament of this battle that I'm talking about.

The war in heaven of which we become aware. Are you with me and we'll read verses 7 to 12 of Revelations 12 page 234 of the New Testament section.

7 to 12 Now war arose in heaven Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven and the great dragon was thrown down that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan and deceiver of the whole world.

[21:57] He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him and I heard a loud voice in heaven saying now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God and they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony for they love not their lives even unto death rejoice then O heaven and you that dwell therein but woe to you for the devil has come down to you in great rock because he knows that his time is short.

Well that's the great spiritual struggle. Now what Jacques Ellul says about Satan is he takes the four names that are used for Satan there and he says who they are.

The dragon is at the bottom of the sea and represents the power of chaos you know that chaos and order are always in conflict and the source of the chaos is the dragon.

Then he talks about the serpent and the serpent is the tempter the proposer of the question by which each time we discover that God is other than he in fact is.

Now you know the question that the serpent put to Eve you know surely God wouldn't do that and so we serpent led Eve to a different understanding of who God is.

[23 : 41] We change who God is then we can live comfortably with him. the serpent suggests. It says the serpent is the creator of doubt and the father of the lie.

That's how he works. The third thing it says about him is the devil. That's the dragon the serpent the devil. The devil is the one who divides promotes disruption between man and God but also wars hatred and disruption between people and people.

the devil divides people and then Satan which is the other name for him that we use commonly is the accuser before God to accuse people to one another and to accuse people before God.

So there you have how Satan works. Chaos lies dividing and accusing and you see if you're not subject to Christ who are you subject to?

And that's that's what the struggle is about because you're not free. If you think you're free of this kind of power you have a vastly overrated sense of your own importance.

[25 : 14] Subjection to Christ is not to be out of fear which subjection to the devil always is but out of love. So John Stott and I quote him because he puts this puts a sort of summary on this and because he's going to be here speaking on Wednesday night at 8 o'clock and I'd like you all to come and hear him but when he looked at this passage in his commentary on Ephesians he says this he says there are two points the first he says is in Revelations chapter 6 verse 10 and you'll see there it says be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might and that's one and then he says and the other is put on the whole armor of God and John R.W.

Stott in his wonderful way says look at the balance of scripture the wonderful balance which scripture gives and he says it takes those who are totally self sufficient and think they need neither strength from the Lord or armor he rebukes them and he also rebukes those who are so self effacing they can do nothing and he says you've got to do both things you've got to be strong in the Lord on the one hand but you also got to buckle on the armor in the other hand you've got to do something about it because you need armor the armor which God provides in the warfare in which you're engaged you need to have it and that's that's why it's it's not just being it's not just being strong in the

Lord and in the strength of his might it's also buckling on the armor and then it goes to tell you about the armor and it tells you and I'm not going to tell you about it but it's there for you to read because you're engaged in this battle and it's not against flesh and blood it's against principalities and powers the rulers of the darkness of this world and you're on one side of the battle or the other Martin Lloyd Jones said that the thing that is really difficult the victory of Satan the chief victory of Satan is in the lives of those who don't think he's there and that people are unaware of this struggle and how he corrupts the struggle and how we lose the battle rather than being strong in the Lord and in the power of his might and putting on as we must the whole armor of God that has been provided for us that we may be defended against the powers of evil let me pray Lord Jesus Christ in our homes in our personal lives in our families and among us as a congregation help us to be aware of the tremendous victory that Jesus has won breaking down the walls of partition overcoming the power of death and leaving Satan a defeated enemy not a powerless enemy but a defeated enemy and give us grace to know that we are involved in the cleanup operation and we are involved having the power of God and the armor which you alone provide and help us happily to be subject to our supreme commander

Jesus Christ and to engage with all the strength that he gives us in the battle which he leads help us not to fight with one another but to love one another help us not to be taken over or to leave a foothold for Satan in our lives but to be strong in Christ in whose name we pray Amen