

Spiritual Poisons, part 2
October 16, 2016



This sermon series is about guarding ourselves from things that can hurt our spirits. Each of us is a living soul, made up of two parts, body and spirit. Both parts can be hurt by impurities we allow into us. You can allow impurities, contaminates, and toxins into your body. And you can also allow impurities, contaminates, and toxins into your spirit. We must guard both our bodies and our spirits from such things.

The key verse for this series is 2 Corinthians 7:1.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV) ... let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

We began this series last week and if you missed it, I encourage you to read part 1 on our church website.

This morning we are looking at a second spiritual poison that can harm us if we do not learn to deal with it. To introduce this poison, let me tell you a true story.

Tommy Bolt was a professional golfer in the 1950's. In the course of his career he won fifteen Professional Golf Association titles, including the 1958 U.S. Open. But Bolt had a problem. He had a fiery temper. It was so bad that it earned him the nicknames, of "Thunder" and "Terrible Tommy". He was known to break or throw golf clubs during play on the course.

One tournament Tommy drew a caddie who had a reputation for talking. Tommy did not want to listen to a lot of talk from his caddie. So when Tommy introduced himself he told the caddie not to talk on the course and only speak to him as "Yes, Mr. Bolt" and "No, Mr. Bolt." The caddie agreed.

Everything went well until near the end of the tournament. Tommy was within site of first place. But on his approach shot he hit his ball and it appeared to stop by a big tree. This left Tommy with a very difficult shot. To win the game he had to hit the ball from under the tree without hitting any of the hanging branches, and still land it on the green.

Tommy looked at the shot then his caddie, and said to him, "Shall I use a five iron?" The caddie replied as instructed. "No, Mr. Bolt." Instead of asking the caddie why not, in his anger that the caddie did not agree with him Tommy hit the ball with a five iron.

It was a beautiful shot, missing the branches and not only making it onto the green, but stopping just a few feet from the hole. Angrily Tommy looked back at the caddy and said, "There, how did you like that? Now you may talk."

The caddie looked at the ball on the green and back at the spot under the tree where it was hit and said, "Mr. Bolt, that was not your ball!"

His anger cost Tommy Bolt two penalty strokes for hitting the wrong ball. It cost him first place and the prize large prize money.

Anger can be a powerful and dangerous poison. We must know what anger is and the danger it holds for us. We must guard against it.

Anger is a natural emotion. We usually do not choose to get angry. Anger just flashes upon us. Someone says something or does something that we don't like and we are suddenly angry. We don't stop first to think and then decide, "I am going to choose to be angry about that." No. We are just suddenly angry, and then we realize we are angry. Anger is a natural emotion that suddenly comes upon us.

Anger can harm your body. Anger constricts your arteries. And this compounds the effects of stress, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other chronic health conditions. So anger can affect your body.

Anger can also affect your spirit. The problem is not anger itself. Anger is a natural emotion. And thus the initial flush of anger is not sin. One reason we know that anger itself is not a sin is that God gets angry. God gets angry, but His anger never leads to sin because God does not sin. God's anger is not sudden like ours because God knows everything.

So anger itself is not sin. It is what you do with your anger that can become the problem. The problem is how you react to your anger.

The danger of anger is that you might choose to sin in response to it.

Responding to your anger by striking out at someone else can be sinful. Throwing things, breaking things, hitting things or people, verbally attacking people by yelling, cursing, and threatening... these are all sinful reactions to anger. This is how we are NOT supposed to react to our anger.

How should we respond to our anger? That is our focus this morning.

1. Take control of your anger.

You can do this. Anger is not in control, you are. You may not have chosen to become angry. You can choose not to react in anger. You know you can do this.

Let's say you are having an angry argument with your child, parent, or spouse. You are yelling, maybe saying things you later will regret. You are giving full vent to your anger. Suddenly the phone rings. Don't you have enough control to quickly calm yourself before you pick up the phone and say, "Hello?" And if it is your boss, your best friend, or someone you are trying to impress, you push your anger aside and carry on a normal conversation.

Well you can do the same thing while in the argument. You can take control of your anger and not let it lead you into sin. We can put a lid on our anger if we choose to do so. Paul encouraged Christians to do this in his letter to the church at Ephesus.

Ephesians 4:26a (NIV) In your anger do not sin.

(Proverbs 29:11, 22; Proverbs 30:33; Ephesians 4:26-27)

So we aren't dealing with an impossibility. You can choose not to run wild in your anger. When you run wild in anger, the devil will suggest sinful ways to react. If you do so you will be sorry later.

> **Don't let your anger turn into impatience, resentment, or hate.** All of these are sins and can lead to worse sinful actions against someone else.

Remember, your anger is not sin. But once you realize you are angry, you must take control of yourself and not be ruled by your anger. You get to choose how to deal with your anger. Do not let it run off and pull you along with it into sin

A lady once came to Billy Sunday, a famous preacher around 1900, and tried to excuse her angry outbursts. She said, "There's nothing wrong with losing my temper. I blow up, and then it's all over." Billy replied, "So does a shotgun, and look at the damage it leaves behind!"

Take control of your anger. Don't let it run wild and get you into all kinds of trouble, as most of us have experienced.

> **Cut short the time you could be angry.** Put the brakes on your anger. Get over it. We go back to Paul's letter. You may not have chosen to become angry. But you can choose to stay angry.

Ephesians 4:26b (NIV) Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry...

Now you cannot stop the sun from going down. What Paul is saying is to bring an end to your anger before the sun does go down. Don't stay angry all day. Whatever cause you to be angry, don't let it disturb your sleep. Deal fully with it today. Don't carry it over to tomorrow.

This is a needed caution, because some people enjoy feeling angry. They nurse their anger. They keep replaying over and over what caused them to be angry.

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions we can feel. It gets us physically stirred up. It gets your adrenaline going. When your adrenaline is moving it can make you feel strong. You feel as if you can do anything. That feeling of strength in anger becomes addictive to some people. They enjoy it, and so they nurse their anger. They give full vent to their anger. Tommy Bolt, the golfer, admitted after he retired from golf that the anger on the golf course was part show. He enjoyed his anger and the reactions he got from others.

But we do not have to do so. We can choose to limit our anger. We must.

2. Figure out why you are angry.

In the Bible book of Genesis, both Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, brought offerings to God. God accepted Abel's offering. But God rejected Cain's offering because Cain's heart was not right towards God. Cain became angry, so God asked him a question. It is a question we all need an answer to when we get angry.

Genesis 4:6 (NIV) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry?"

God asked this question in order to get Cain to think about his anger. Cain had no good reason for his anger. Instead, God had a very good reason for rejecting Cain's offering. And if Cain had stopped to examine his anger, he would have realized that God was right.

Instead, Cain let his anger lead him into sin. Cain killed his brother out of jealousy.

If Cain had figured out the answer to God's question, he might not have sinned. Figuring out why we are angry is a good practice for us all to do.

As a married adult, I thought I was pretty laid back. Not much ruffled me. Then I became a dad. I started getting angry more often and more strongly. After several years of this the Lord led me to start asking why I was angry. At first I did not know. But as I worked at looking within my heart I determined that the reason I was getting so angry. My sons were not giving me the respect I thought I deserved as their dad. And when I received disrespect I got angry.

I learned that the source of my anger was my own unmet expectations for respect. Holding those expectations up to God, I saw how undeserving I was of my son's respect. I needed to earn their respect. I should not expect it simply because I was "the dad."

It was only after I figured out why I was angry, that I could start choosing to react differently. I changed my expectations and then my behavior.

When you get angry this week, ask yourself, "Why? Why am I angry?" Or you might ask, "Why am I SO angry?" Answering that question will help you in dealing correctly with your anger.

Now let me say here, that there is such a thing as righteous anger. This is anger for a good cause. It may be anger because of someone being treated unjustly. It may be an anger because someone you care about is being hurt by someone else. Some anger is for a good purpose. But even righteous anger can turn to sin. You can react in a non-righteous way to righteous anger.

Figure out why you are angry. Your anger may not be justified. It may rely on sinful desires, selfish expectations, or hateful attitudes towards someone else.

3. If you do sin against someone in your anger apologize quickly, sincerely, and humbly, making no excuses. Admit that you were wrong.

God values relationships. God values our relationship with Him. And God also values our relationships with each other. God provided, in Jesus, a way for us to be reconciled to God, to patch up a broken relationship. God wants us to do the same in all of our relationships. This is reconciliation. Reconciliation is to be a priority for us. Jesus teaches this in His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) "... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Jesus is saying that fixing our relationships with each other is a priority of God. It must be a priority for us too.

> **In your prayers, request that God grow His love in you.** Look at this statement about the kind of love God has, and that we must have.

1 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV) (Love)... is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
(Psalm 103:8; James 1:19-20)

God gets angry, but we are taught that God is slow to become angry. That means God, in His perfect knowledge, is patient, longsuffering, compassionate, and merciful to those who He is angry at. God gets angry slowly. God gets angry and does not sin. If we are to be people of reconciliation for Jesus, we must have His love in us.

God is in complete control of his anger and always reacts correctly in response. This is the love that God is growing in Christians.

Over time, as you grow to become more like Jesus, you will not get angry as quickly, as often, or as hot. You will gain more self-control in your reactions to anger.

An author for Reader's Digest tells about studying the Amish people in preparation for an article on them. In his observation at the school yard, he noted that the children never screamed or yelled at each other. This amazed him. So he asked the principle why that might be. The principle replied, "Well, have you ever heard an Amish adult yell?"

Jesus will grow His love in us, and all the more as we pray for it.

Invitation: God is perfect. God is perfectly loving. God is perfectly good. God is perfectly just. God is also perfectly angry over sin. Romans 1:18 says that in the Gospel...

Romans 1:18 (NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

One day God will righteously pour out His wrath upon the earth. Will you escape? The only escape from that horrible day is by submitting your life and will to Jesus. If you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, God will forgive all your sins and give you eternal life.

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"People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing." -- Will Rogers

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W.R. Hymn "Breath On Me"

Point out the title.

Read John 20:19-22

Jesus was preparing them to receive the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after this. In praying this, we are asking Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit so we might serve Him faithfully in His power.