

## The Angry Fool – by Justin

“YOU’RE NOT GOING TO F@&%ING TALK TO ME LIKE THAT!” It was a church meeting. One of the church’s employees had been talking down to me. I think she was just joking, but I was tired of it. Now here we were at a meeting with the other employees, and it was time to let her have it. I started cussing her out and putting her in her place. She sat there in silence, stunned at the way I was talking to her. Then our preacher got up to intervene. He was calm but firm when he told me I could not behave that way and I needed to leave. Now it got tricky for me. On the one hand, I didn’t want him to think he was able to back me down. I had too much pride for that. On the other hand, I had deep respect for him. He was the sort of man I wanted to be. So, I stood there, screaming at him and at her, not really sure what to do next. I then realized I had two options: 1) I could shut up and leave the building; or 2) I could have a physical fight with the minister. I would have to throw the first punch, though, since he had too much self-control to do that. It was awkward and uncomfortable, and there was no way I was going to get physical with one of God’s faithful ministers. I finally walked out of the building – after having shown the whole world what a giant fool I really was.

*Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. (Ecc. 7:9)*

*The man with understanding controls his anger; but a short temper shows great stupidity. (Prov. 14:29)*

There are some strange creatures in the world. These creatures are usually too lazy and short-sighted to do what they must to make things better. When something happens that they don’t like, they close up, puff out their chest, and put their angry face on. They would like you to think they are dangerous and you better stay out of their way! When they get like this, they are not teachable. These strange creatures are called “children.”

I have realized I am not the only adult infected by the childish disease of anger. It is all over our culture. Movies glorify angry and dangerous men. Popular Rap and Rock music is often infused with anger. Facebook memes and social media display the intense amount of anger radiating through our culture. Fear of other religions and races often drives people to senseless hatred. The news media is a 24-hour cycle of anger production. Turn it on and you risk your own peace of mind. Anger is now a way of life in the United States. Sometimes I get letters from inmates dripping with anger when I pull them out of the envelope. An unfair judge, a crappy lawyer, a disloyal spouse, an unsupportive family, friends who turned out to be traitors, some other inmate who gets under the skin, and on and on the anger churns. There are countless men in the penitentiary because they failed to control their short temper.

*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. ... 18 A short-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets a fight. (Prov. 15:1, 18)*

*With patience a ruler’s mind can be changed, and a soft tongue will break a bone. (Prov. 25:15)*

Who is the strongest man in the room? Is it the man with the angry face? Is it the one whose intimidating gaze stirs fear in the heart of his enemy? Is it the one willing to resort to violence to assert his dominance or to prove his position in a disagreement? No, he’s not the one. His angry face is a mask he wears to hide his weak and fragile state. The heavy burden of failure has made him this way. I have too many of my own anger issues to pretend I got it all figured out, but I know the first step to beating anger is to *stop respecting the angry man, to stop wanting to be him*. He is not really a man at all, but the victim of a childish disease, and we are all in big trouble if we continue to idolize those who can only get respect by dominating others.

So, I ask again, who is the strongest man in the room? The strongest man in the room is the one who has enough character to take a little criticism. He doesn’t take an insult too seriously, and he knows it doesn’t matter what other people think about him. When others have tongues for swords and teeth made of iron, the strongest man in the room can stop anger in its tracks with a word of kindness. He knows that people are just people, and he knows people need a lot of mercy. He is not afraid to give credit where credit is due, and he is big enough to admit when he is wrong. He is not a coward, but he is also not empty-headed enough to consider violence an option. He is the one who faces his problems with honesty instead of blaming them on others. Because he is this way, he is a natural leader. When others are overwhelmed in the dark sea of negativity, they look to him because they know he is looking forward to tomorrow. His encouraging spirit is medicine to those in pain. He doesn’t look to Facebook, the news, or an angry culture to define who he is. He looks up to the God who shows mercy to the merciful and patience to the patient. He is not a man of anger. He is a man of God.