

TEMPER YOUR TEMPER!

Most murders in the United States are committed by relatives or acquaintances of the victims. And many of these are the result of uncontrolled outbursts of anger or rage. Read here what your Bible says about controlling your temper.

THE TIME: a balmy summer evening. The place: a resort hotel on the beach.

Jim and Sharon, a middle-aged couple on vacation, were at the desk registering for their room.

Their reservation stipulated a room with a view of the beach. But the reservation clerk insisted that all the rooms with a beach view were taken. They would have to take a room with a view toward the city.

Sharon was deeply disappointed. She had anticipated this vacation for a year. She had lived vicariously rough every minute detail of it. A room overlooking the ocean was a pleasure she had planned to thoroughly enjoy. And she was sure Jim would protest to the clerk and secure the room described in their reservation.

But to her amazement and total disgust, Jim docilely accepted the second-rate room.

"Why, the weak-kneed so-and-so," she thought. "Why doesn't he stick up for us and get the room we both wanted?"

She knew, as Jim sheepishly paid for the room, that she must control herself. But it seemed as if she could barely hold herself in.

Two hours later in their room, as they were snacking on cheese and wine, Sharon finally erupted.

"Jim, why didn't you stand up like a man and demand the room you knew we had planned for and reserved? Don't you have any back-

bone? Sometimes you just don't act like the man I married."

Of course, this made Jim feel guilty and at the same time infuriated him.

Stung, he retorted, attempting to tell Sharon off and put her in her place. This angered Sharon even more. Eyes snapping, face reddening and veins bulging, she stood up and flew into an uncontrollable rage. Shrieking at him at the top of her voice, she finally yelled out, as she grabbed a bread knife. "I could kill you!" Jim, also in a rage, yelled back. "Go ahead!"

Jim was buried three days later. His life ended in tragedy during what was to have been the highlight of the whole year for him and his wife.

Sharon, suffering the most mental turmoil, depression, sorrow and bewilderment of her life, was held by authorities for first-degree murder. It seemed like a terrible unbelievable nightmare—she still halfway expected to wake up from it. But the stark reality was that she had *murdered* her own husband in an uncontrolled outburst of temper and rage.

How About You? And when did *you* last lose *your* temper? What made you abandon self-control and fly into a rage? What did you say that you later wished you hadn't?

Probably none of your bursts of anger have ever ended up like Sharon's and Jim's. But one could! Any of us can say and do things *irration-*

ally in the heat of anger that we may forever regret and for which we may pay severe penalties.

The solution is prevention—*avoiding* such outbursts of uncontrolled emotion.

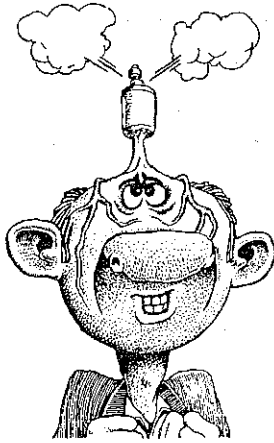
Let's peek into the personalities of a few biblical notables whose hot blood boiled over at times. Most of us picture great men of the Bible as quiet, contemplative characters of near absolute perfection. But this isn't so.

Moses' Temper. Even Moses had a temper. In Exodus 2:11-12 we read that he killed an Egyptian in "righteous" indignation at the abuse of an Israelite slave.

Exodus 32 tells of Moses' anger (righteous indignation again) upon returning from Mt. Sinai and viewing the incredible sight of the Israelites worshiping a golden calf. Upon seeing this spectacle, he actually smashed the tables of stone upon which God had personally written the Ten Commandments. Being angry at such blatant sin is totally understandable (see Ephesians 4:26), but smashing those stones was a rash act that Moses undoubtedly later deeply regretted.

The fact that Moses himself had to hew two tables of stone just like the ones he broke and carry them up Mt. Sinai indicates that God wanted to impress a temper control lesson upon Moses (Ex. 34:1-2).

Numbers 20 records that Moses became impatient with his people



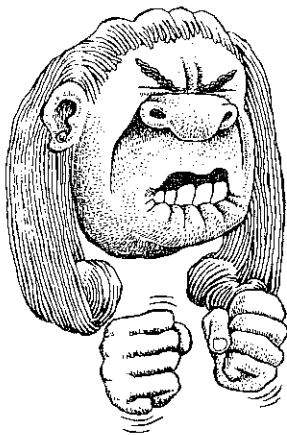
"I hope this pop valve will keep my blood pressure down."



"You guessed it! I finally blew my stack!"



"If only I could keep cool as a cucumber!"



"What ever makes you imagine I'm angry?"



"You make me SO mad!"



"If I'm going to be a hothead, I might as well use the energy."

when they complained about a lack of water. He lashed out at them (verse 10). Verse 11 records that Moses struck the rock twice. In his anger he had failed to follow God's commands.

Then God told Moses and Aaron that they would not enter the Promised Land because they had failed to sanctify Him or follow His commands (verse 12). He had told Moses to speak to the rock and strike it once. In his impatience and anger with the people, Moses shouted at them (Ps. 106:33) and struck the rock twice.

God knew that the leader of His people had to exercise self-control and avoid "flying off the handle" and making irrational decisions in the

heat of anger. To emphasize His point, He disciplined Moses and Aaron.

The Israelites were a griping, grumbling, emotionally motivated people. God simply could not afford to allow Moses to react as he did. He knew that uncontrolled anger leads to erratic and irresponsible behavior.

Sons of Thunder. Apparently Jesus' disciples James and John were men recognized as having proclivity to "blow their stacks." In Mark 3:17 Jesus nicknamed them the "sons of thunder." The name was appropriate. Read Luke 9:52-56:

"One day He [Jesus] sent messengers ahead to reserve rooms for them in a Samaritan village. But they were turned away! The people

of the village refused to have anything to do with them because they were headed for Jerusalem.

"When word came back of what had happened, James and John said to Jesus, 'Master shall we order fire down from heaven to burn them up?' But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went on to another village." (This and all of the following quotes are from *The Living Bible*.)

Peter was another example of a man capable of instant fury. He sliced off the right ear of Malchus, the High Priest's servant (John 18:10-11). Jesus immediately reprimanded him. This happened when Jesus was arrested shortly before His crucifixion.

Peter was either a very accurate marksman with his sword—being able to hit such a small target as an ear—or a rather poor “shot.” He may have aimed squarely *between* the man’s ears—which would have made all the difference to Malchus!

Rewards of Self-control. Let’s face it. None of us are perfect and some of us may never completely eradicate our bad tempers. But we should be able to learn control to the point that losing our temper is the exception rather than the rule. And as we do this, we will reap practical results.

One of these benefits is examined in Proverbs 14:30:

“A relaxed attitude lengthens a man’s life; jealousy rots it away.”

Many doctors and psychologists agree that emotions often directly affect and cause physical symptoms.

Negative emotions such as stress, anger, or resentment can cause a multitude of ills from tension-headaches to constipation. Digestive difficulties, trouble in swallowing, gastric ulcers, rheumatoid arthritis, backaches, high blood pressure, hives, colds, and even asthma have at times been connected with emotionally seething minds.

God meant that proverb *literally*. A relaxed attitude, free of constant chronic resentment, dissatisfaction or chronic anger, makes for a longer, healthier life.

Here’s another advantage of “keeping cool.” It is mentioned in Proverbs 14:29:

“A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes.”

Have you ever made a decision in the heat of anger? Chances are you were sorry later if you did. I know a person whose car would not start in a downtown parking lot. After an hour of trying to start it, he was “madder than a wet hen” and on the verge of vowing he would trade the car in for a different one that very night.

Fortunately, after getting the car started and arriving home, he cooled off and decided to keep the car. It was in fine mechanical condition—needing only a minor adjustment. He could have traded in a

perfectly good car for another that might have given him far more trouble than the original. And, of course, he would have had to pay additional money for the new car.

Do you see how easy it is to make a foolish decision without calmly weighing all the facts? Remember, controlling your temper will result in wiser decisions—which will result in a smoother, more organized, prosperous life for you and your family.

Win Friends and Influence People.

Proverbs 19:11 states: “A wise man restrains his anger and overlooks insults. This is to his credit.”

Two points here. A wise man will have more friends and less enemies because he does not antagonize others. He will generally be well-liked—and that’s important. How can you help others, either directly or by your example, if they do not respect and like you as a friend or at least an acquaintance?

The second point contained in this proverb is that a wise man does not let others rule his emotions. He doesn’t automatically react with contempt or anger toward someone who insults him. He is not at the mercy of another person’s rude remarks. He is big enough to disregard them, to step aside, to ignore and forgive the person for being a boor.

A fool is always vulnerable. He is often like a gun with a hair trigger—always ready to discharge with just a little pressure. He is a slave to his emotions.

Results of a Red-hot Temper. “A hot-tempered man starts fights and gets into all kinds of trouble” (Prov. 29:22). Enemies, bad feelings, strife, lack of cooperation and hard feelings are this man’s lot in life. He lacks peace of mind and often agitates others. He lives from one hassle to the next.

His family life is destroyed by this same attitude and behavior. “The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left. He shall be the servant of a wiser man” (Prov. 11:29). So the family atmosphere often turns into a scarred battleground. A ridiculously high price to pay for lack of self-control.

Here’s another hazard: “A man without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls” (Prov. 25:28). A hot-tempered man is vulnerable. He often discloses things he should not, exaggerates things that are not true, and reveals to everyone that he is operating on nervous emotional energy—not logical reason.

Proverbs 13:3 says it another way: “Self-control means controlling the tongue! A quick retort can ruin everything.” In other words be sure your mind is in gear before engaging your mouth.

An End-time Problem. We need to beware of today’s prevalent lack of self-control prophesied by the Apostle Paul:

“You may as well know this too, Timothy, that *in the last days* it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian. For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them and thoroughly bad. They will be hardhearted and never give in to others; they will be constant liars and troublemakers and will think nothing of immorality. They will be rough and cruel, and sneer at those who try to be good. They will betray their friends; they will be *hotheaded* . . .” (II Tim. 3:1-4).

Let’s temper our tempers and reap the automatic benefits! □

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