

Take A Chill Pill!

Joe Slater

A crow spied a big tube of bologna on the ground. He greedily consumed the entire chub. Then he rested on the pump handle of an old well. A few minutes later he tried to fly away. As he removed his weight, the pump handle quickly sprang up and hit him. The crow fell dead to the ground. The moral of the story: Don't fly off the handle when you're full of baloney!

Six Old Testament passages by five different authors affirm that God is "slow to anger." Does this mean God is never angry? By no means! Numerous texts in both testaments speak of God's wrath. But God doesn't "fly off the handle." Ask the money changers in the Temple if Jesus ever became angry! But again, Jesus wasn't a hothead.

Are you soon angry? Do you need to "take a chill pill"? That's not to say your anger is never justified, but if God is slow to anger, shouldn't you imitate Him?

Some think explosive anger shows how tough they are. Quite the opposite, it demonstrates weakness. "*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city*" (Proverbs 16:32). "*Outbursts of wrath*" are works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20) while "*self-control*" manifests the fruit of the Spirit (5:23).

In his matchless treatment of love, Paul wrote that love "*is not (easily) provoked*" (1 Corinthians 13:5). We have borrowed his word for provoked – "paroxysm" (a sudden, violent expression of emotion). Christian love requires being slow to anger.

Whether you're at home, at school, at work, at church, or somewhere else, be slow to anger. You'll be better for it because you'll be like God.

Action-Packed Faith

The New Testament has a lot to say about faith. Many of us may think that faith is simply believing and accepting the existence of God and that Jesus Christ is His Son. But a close study of the Scriptures will reveal that faith is much, much more. The 2nd chapter of James spends quite a bit of time explaining that faith must be coupled with good works, else, it is dead and useless. (James 2:14-26) We may want to argue that we can't "work" our way to heaven and that's absolutely true. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-5) However, when considering the message of the New Testament as a whole, we learn that we must possess a faith of action in order to be pleasing to the Lord. Let's consider the "Heroes of Faith" listed in Hebrews Chapter 11:

- By faith, Abel "offered" (v. 4)
- By faith, Enoch "pleased" God (v. 5)
- By faith, Noah "moved" and "prepared" an ark (v. 7)
- By faith, Abraham "obeyed" (v. 8)
- By faith, Sarah "conceived" a son (v. 11)
- By faith, Abraham "offered" up Isaac (v. 17)
- By faith, Isaac "blessed" his sons (v. 20)
- By faith, Jacob "worshipped" leaning on his staff (v. 21)
- By faith, Moses "suffered" affliction (v. 24-25)

The Old Testament heroes did not live to see the promise of Jesus Christ come to pass, but now we can look to the "*author and finisher of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:1-2) and access the mercy, love, and saving grace of God through an action-packed faith. (Ephesians 2:4-5)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

No Greater King

Society and culture alike have abandoned obedience in favor of freedom. The latter has become so much of a priority that submission remains an estranged discipline. Unfortunately, this is not "new" for humanity. It is the same old story that has been written for centuries on end.

As Samuel approached the finale of life, he recognized the need for leaders to continue after him, so he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. While filling the role as leaders, they were actively disobedient to God by taking bribes and twisting justice (1 Samuel 8:3). Upon seeing the evil, the elders of the Israelites took it upon themselves to offer a solution. The nations surrounding Israel all had kings, which invoked a covetous attitude in the Israelite elders. They told Samuel, "*appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations*" (1 Samuel 8:5).

Their request seems honorable, and even admirable. However, the problem is rooted more deeply. If one keeps reading in 1 Samuel 8:7, God resents their decision because "*they have rejected me from being King over them.*" In attempting to solve their dilemma, the people of Israel sought an answer outside of God.

Several hundred years later, Paul would argue "*let not sin reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions*" (Romans 6:12). While society places a priority on freedom and self-will, they fail to recognize that they are, in reality, serving the master of sin. In denying God as King, we remain subjects and servants to sin. Scripture adamantly reminds us of how good of a King God is. The world is faced with the impossible task of finding a God who loves more, cares more, guides more, and blesses more than the Lord of heaven.

--Author Unknown (via Mt. Carmel Coc, Athens, AL)