

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, February 17, 2018

Have you ever been angry at God? Have you ever blamed God for something that went awry? Over the years I've carried on many conversations with people who admitted they angrily distanced themselves from their Heavenly Father. I have no way of knowing just how close their relationship once was, but it became obvious just how distant it had since become. If you can identify with this discussion, I'd like to ask you just one more salient question. What good did it do to blame God for your circumstances? Once you stop grinding your teeth, take a deep breath and let go of the perceived pain, I suggest you simply look at the incident or incidents that have created such animosity and you'll hopefully see how silly the whole scenario has played out.

I've never been angry at God for anything, but I did gradually drift far away from Him years ago as I became disenchanted with church life as a young adult. God has done nothing to deserve our anger and Jesus has done nothing to warrant our displeasure. Yet millions hate Him for being the Christ, the Messiah. It appears this world does not want a Savior to lord over it. But that's exactly why God sent His Son into the world two thousand years ago. As I went through my early years, I was obedient to my parents' desires for my life. As I reached adulthood, I became quite independent and veered from much of the sage advice my parents shared when they felt it would help me in future life decisions.

Now I've experienced the flip side of the coin as a parent of an adult daughter. Some of the counsel I've shared with her has not been appreciated and she's certainly been angry with her Dad and her Mom at times. But those passionate moments were usually short lived. We can easily act similarly to the instruction and counsel of our Heavenly Father. Often we might feel that His commandments have been forced down our throats. Personally, I've learned to take the Bible as the inerrant word of God and use it as an instruction manual to ascertain the best possible decisions I might possibly make as I go through my business, family and personal life. I'm cautious to use the whole word and also ask for godly counsel from those I know I can trust.

Our God is a merciful father Who cares deeply for His people. If you haven't read the story of Jonah lately, I suggest to take a few minutes to read it in depth. It's only four chapters long and it contains so much more than the account of Jonah being swallowed by a big fish. In Jonah 2:10 we're told *"And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land."* That's what it took for God to get Jonah's attention and to finally obey His plan for the inhabitants of Nineveh. In Jonah 3:1-3 we're informed *"Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.' Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city – a visit required three days."*

God was prepared to destroy the kingdom as Jonah prophesied to the people of this deeply evil city. Upon hearing the message of the Lord, the king declared that all Nineveh must repent and abstain from eat and drink and hope that God might have compassion on their city. In Jonah 3:10 we're told *"When God saw what they did and how they had turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened."* But there was one unhappy camper. In Jonah 4:1 we're told *"But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry."* Here he was used by God to experience the greatest revival in human history and Jonah was angry at God!

As I see it, the real issue is we want to have things go our way. Our real concern should be to obediently do things God's way. I'll leave the rest of the story of Jonah to your reading. All I'll say is Jonah was more concerned about a plant to give him shade and a lowly worm than he was about the well-being of the one hundred and twenty thousand people in Nineveh. So what are your concerns? Do you have everything in perspective? I hope you'll draw near to God and realize He cares dearly for your well-being.

Passages to Ponder: Numbers 14:18-19; Psalm 78:38-39; Proverbs 30:32-33; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Ephesians 4:26-27; James 1:19-21

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Numbers 14:18-19 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸“The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” ¹⁹In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”

Psalm 78:38-39 New International Version (NIV)

³⁸ Yet he was merciful;
he forgave their iniquities
and did not destroy them.

Time after time he restrained his anger
and did not stir up his full wrath.

³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh,
a passing breeze that does not return.

Proverbs 30:32-33 New International Version (NIV)

³² “If you play the fool and exalt yourself,
or if you plan evil,
clap your hand over your mouth!

³³ For as churning cream produces butter,
and as twisting the nose produces blood,
so stirring up anger produces strife.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Ephesians 4:26-27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

James 1:19-21 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.