

# Partners In Courage, August 2012

## PUT OFF ANGER

Sermon by Wes Daughenbaugh

TEXT: Eph. 4:26-27 **“In your anger do not sin”:** Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Eph. 4:29-31 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**

Eph. 4:31KJV **Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:**

**INTRODUCTION:** For many people anger is an old friend, a very easy and useful response that seems absolutely justified. It seems like OTHERS should “put off making me angry.” And—“How can I put off anger when those jerks refuse to put off their irritating and unjust behavior?”

You may be a saint or a sinner—a carnal Christian or a real hero of the faith. You may think you do not have an anger problem. If true, then this message will help you to avoid getting one. My point—you need this message and I need this message. *Let’s not shovel it over our shoulders to those we think need it more than we do.* To worship God in Spirit and truth we will have to admit that anger is something we have to deal with ourselves and that our responses could use improvement. Could your responses to anger provoking events and people use improvement? Yes? Me too! Having admitted that, we are more ready to benefit from what God’s word has to say about where to PUT the anger we PUT OFF.

### 1. ARE WE GOING TO AGREE WITH GOD OR ARGUE WITH GOD?

**A.** He says, “If you hold on to your anger for more than twelve hours—for whatever reason—you will have given permission for the devil to take some measure of control of your life.”

**B.** This implies that the longer anger is HELD the MORE control the devil gets. Thus if twelve plus hours of anger provides the devil with a string to bind someone with—than many years of anger provide the devil with a chain with which to bind and control the angry person. John Coblenz writes, “If anger carried over to the next day is spiritually dangerous, offering the devil a foothold, what about week-old anger? Or month-old? Or year old? Some people have patterns of blame associated with specific people that go back 20,30, or 40 years. With such bitterness, the devil’s foothold becomes a fortress, complete with a dungeon and a torture changer.” (Page 23 of PUTTING OFF ANGER)

**C.** God says that anger warps the perception of the angry one so that his or her sense of reality is skewed and discernment is lost in proportion to the amount of anger held. The more anger the less discernment. 1John 2:11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

We see there is a complete lack of discernment in hatred. The opposite is true of love. The more love we have, the better our discernment.

Phil. 1:9-11 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless

**until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.**

A quote from PUTTING OFF ANGER: “the moment we feel anger, we are in danger of sinning. But when we allow anger to take up residence in our heart, sin is inevitable. Along with this sin goes deception. Resident anger distorts perspective. It causes us to make distorted assumptions, see with a distorted perspective and draw distorted conclusions.” (Page 27)

\*\*\*\* King Saul was angry at David because after David killed the giant Goliath the young girls and women were singing, “Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands.” The Bible says this GALLED King Saul. It really got to him—making anger boil inside of him. From then on he view David with a jealous eye—and with a totally warped perspective of reality.

Eventually King Saul “saw” David as a rebel, a plotter, and an evil person with a murderous heart—out to murder him and seize the kingdom. When David fled he asked an aged priest to inquire of God for him and give him some bread. The priest didn’t know that Saul was trying to kill David. Saul arrested the priest and charged him with treason for helping David. 1Sam. 22:13 ¶ Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?”

1Sam. 22:14-15 Ahimelech answered the king, “Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king’s son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father’s family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair.”

From an accurate perspective of truth and reality—David was the most loyal person to King Saul in the entire Kingdom! But from Saul’s viewpoint he was the very worst—public enemy number one!

\*\*\*\* WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WHAT ANGER DID TO KING SAUL IT CAN DO TO US. A spirit of anger will deceive, warp perspective and help people justify doing something evil—making them think it’s the RIGHT thing to do!

King Saul felt totally justified in killing not only this innocent priest—but also 85 priests along with their wives and children! Not only that—the entire town of Nob where the priests lived was wiped out. Even the animals were killed. Anyone living there to make shoes or clothing or food for the priests would have been murdered as well as the 85 priests! And this looked like RIGHTEOUSNESS to King Saul!

\*\*\*\* LET US ALL CONSIDER: Our perspective, our grasp of reality—may not be how things actually are! At the very least, if we are angry—we should SLOW DOWN. Prov. 29:11 **A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.** We ought to be open to spiritual counsel so that others could take a look at our viewpoint. Saul’s soldiers would not kill the priests—because the priests didn’t look guilty to them! King Saul ignored their perspective and found Doeg the Edomite who would agree with him—and Doeg the Edomite killed the priests and everyone with them at Saul’s command. \*\*\*\* MEANING: We should ask God what it looks like Him and also ask wise people what it looks like to them before we jump into some action from which there would be no return. Prov. 12:15 **The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.**

**D. God says that angry expressions endanger the soul with the fire of hell.**

Jesus said, **“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5:22).**

Many Christians call people a lot worse things than a “fool” and think nothing of it. Can you think of some common things you call people when you are driving in traffic and someone cuts you off, rides on your bumper or won’t let you change lanes? My message would sound too vulgar if I listed some of the words Christians often call others—words that are more vulgar than “fool.”

By the way—Jesus himself called the Pharisees “fools” and “blind guides” and “hypocrites.” Some people are, indeed, fools. The DANGER is when you call someone a FOOL and they ARE NOT a fool!

\*\*\*\* When we sin willfully we are not covered by the blood of Christ. A lady with the last name of Wickramaratne ran a Christian orphanage in Sri-Lanka. “Charmers”—occult men were always trying to kill her with witchcraft. They would bury “charms” with death curses under her doorstep but these curses could not come upon her—UNTIL ONE DAY WHEN SHE EXPLODED IN A TEMPER RAGE. She stepped on the doorstep and was smitten—all her organs began to shut down. Prayer was of no avail until she repented of her anger. Then the death curse was broken.

MY POINT—we need to realize that the verbal expression of intense anger is always DANGEROUS.

**Prov. 12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.**

**Prov. 30:11-14 “There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers; those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth; those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful; those whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth, the needy from among mankind.**

*ANGRY WORDS ARE WEAPONS* and we will be held responsible if we use them wrongly.

You might say, “But Lord, when did I stab anyone? I have never thrust a sword into anyone! Lord, I have never carried a knife and got in a knife fight! How can you accuse me of stabbing and cutting people?” What if the Lord said, “YOU DID IT WITH YOUR ANGRY WORDS.”

E. God says your tongue is full of deadly poison, restless evil and is set on fire by hell. He says it cannot be tamed but only controlled.

**James 3:6-8 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.**

\*\*\*\* THE CHRISTIAN WHO WILL NOT CONTROL HIS OR HER TONGUE DECEIVES THEMSELVES AND THEIR RELIGION IS USELESS!

**James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.**

Use the grace God gives you to control your tongue—keeping in TIGHTLY under control just as a rider would keep a “tight rein” on a horse that is eager run.

SO YOU AGREE WITH GOD ON THESE POINTS?

## 2. WHOSE FAULT IS IT THAT YOU ARE ANGRY?

Others may provoke us to anger—but we always choose our own response to that anger. We cannot blame our RESPONSE on anyone. If we don’t take responsibility for our response and if instead we blame our bad responses on someone else—we deceive ourselves.

The minute you say that your bad response is someone else’s fault you are blame-shifting. We keep our sin if we deny it is sin. We can deny we are angry and hold on to it. We can admit we are angry and justify it. We can admit we are angry and blame it on someone else. All three of these responses bring increasing deception and the warping of our perspective.

**Prov. 28:13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.**

**1John 1:8-9 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

OUR RESPONSE IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY. No one can change unless they accept responsibility for their own responses.

\*\*\*\* I remember seeing a Denise the Menace cartoon where he was explaining to an adult, “BUT HE HIT ME BACK FIRST!” Denise wasn’t going to take responsibility for starting a fight.

\*\*\*\* YOU AND I HAD BETTER TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR RESPONSES because God is going to hold us accountable for those responses!

**Matt. 12:36-37 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

### 3. WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO CONTROL?

If our focus is on controlling our temper, our tongue and even controlling our thoughts then we manifest the fruit of the Spirit called “self-control.”

**Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.**

**2Cor. 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

**Phil. 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

If we will not focus on controlling our temper, our tongue and our thoughts—then our focus shifts to controlling others!

John Coblentz writes, “Not all people who try to control others are bitter, but all who are bitter try to control. Sometimes a bitter person’s control tactics are overt (as for example, in an outburst of anger—controlling by making others back off), but many times the control tactics are subtle and have no seeming connection to bitterness. To understand why a bitter person tries to control others, we need to understand that a bitter person is fighting an emotional warfare against situations or people he cannot change. He may go over and over events that have happened in the past and can never be undone, or he may spend his free time mentally arguing with or outmaneuvering a person he resents. In any case, the bitter person is struggling against what is beyond his control. But the tendency is to think of ways to bring the situation and people back under control.” (Page 43, PUTTING OFF ANGER)

\*\*\*\* Let’s all take a good look at ourselves. Are we really trying to control our own thoughts, attitudes, words and actions? Are we praying that God will help us by the power of the Holy Spirit to control ourselves? If we are putting little or no effort into controlling our own tongue or thoughts, attitudes or actions—then MOST LIKELY there is illegitimate effort to control others.

\*\*\* There is legitimate control—as in riot police trained in crowd control, parents controlling their children in public places and generals who keep their troops in control. All such examples of proper control involve someone with legitimate authority over others. Illegitimate control involves trying to control people over whom there is no actual authority. When Aaron made a golden calf he “let the people get out of control” and become a laughing stock. He failed to exercise proper authority (Ex. 32:25). Bad control is trying to control the actions of others for some selfish reason—not for their own benefit.

### 4. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF RESPONSES TO ANGER—EMOTIONAL BASED RESPONSES AND BIBLE BASED RESPONSES.

For our own good and the good of others we must STOP making emotion-based responses and PRACTICE making Bible-based responses.

Here are some examples of emotion-based responses.

**A. Temper patterns:** an explosive outburst or an inward seething against something or someone who displeases me. When expressed outwardly, words are harsh, loud and accusing; actions are rash

and destructive. The explosive temper damages everyone nearby; whereas, the person who internalizes his or her anger primarily harms themselves.

**B. Blame patterns:** focusing on all the ways others are responsible for my problems. Words are loaded with accusations and insinuations; actions revolve around the desire to exact a price.

**C. Victim patterns:** finding security in not being responsible. Words drip with self-pity, sadness, and complaint. Actions are often restrained, even lethargic. The victim is constantly on the lookout for hurts and slights.

**D. Control patterns:** manipulating or pressuring people by causing emotional misery until they do what I want. Angry, bitter people are ALWAYS controllers in some way.

\*\*\*\* Here we really need to ask the Holy Spirit if we respond in these ways and to what degree because it would be very natural to say, “I don’t do any of those things but I know people who do!”

**Psa. 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.**

\*\*\*\* If we don’t detect these responses in ourselves spiritual bondage will grow around us like a choking vine that eventually kills the host tree it entwines.

“Food left over from one day to the next (and the next and the next) changes form. It spoils, begins to stink, and draws flies, which breed maggots; we call it garbage. Anger goes through a process no less nauseous when carried around in a person’s heart. It, too, changes form. Anger sours into resentment, internal murmuring, blame patterns, self-pity, frustration and discouragement. Bitterness sets in.” (Page 17, Putting Off Anger)

“The most subtle aspect of the anger process is that the longer it is held onto, the more natural and reasonable and right it seems to be. But though it is seeming more right, it is becoming more deadly.” (Page 19, Putting Off Anger)

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLE-BASED RESPONSES:

**A. They come to us, of course, from God’s Word.** “In the midst of the trial, injustice and pain, how we feel is not the only consideration. God cares about how we feel. He is not insensitive to our frustration, confusion, grief, or pain. *But we need far more than our feelings as a base for discerning how we should respond under such conditions.* We need the sure Word of God. We need direction that does not change with circumstances, guidance that does not go up and down with our emotions. We need wisdom beyond our limited understanding.” (Page 54-55, Putting Off Anger)

\*\*\*\* If we do not read and meditate in God’s word regularly we put ourselves at a terrible disadvantage. We simply are unaware of Bible-Based responses that contain God’s wisdom!

**B. Bible-based responses often go against our natural sensibilities.**

**1Cor. 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

These Bible based responses just DO NOT make sense to the natural man. “Following God’s directions may mean doing exactly the opposite of what we feel like doing. We follow God’s directions, then, not because we feel like it, but because God’s directions are right.” (Page 55)

**C. Bible-based responses develop into Christ-like Character.** “Carnality becomes habitual when we base our responses on feelings like anger, resentment, or self-pity, so it is with Bible-based responses. The more we exercise ourselves in God’s ways, the more they become our pattern of behavior. Even as people come to expect a pouter to pout when things don’t go as expected, so people come to expect a believer to look to God when faced with the same disappointment.” (Page 56)

**D. Bible-based responses lead to victory.** If we would be “overcomers” then we must overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony. Our testimony is the Word we obey. If you can get God’s help to find a Bible-based response to whatever situation is provoking you to anger—you will get the victory. So it’s really WORTH THE TIME to seek God in His Word and in prayer until you KNOW that your response is based upon obedience to God’s word. This is all-important!

**Rom. 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.**

**Rom. 12:17-19** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

**Rom. 12:20** On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

**Rom. 12:21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Here are a few more “classic” examples of Bible-based responses.

**Luke 6:27-31** “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

**Luke 6:32-36** “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners,’ expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

If your reward is great and you are sons of the Most High—that means you’ll have Jesus style virtues and as a result, Jesus style victories. You will overcome evil instead of being overcome by it.

## 5. HERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES OF BIBLE-BASED RESPONSES.

A. Faith patterns: rather than being angry, you have faith that God is in control, allowing these things and working, ultimately, for your good.

**Gen. 50:15-17** When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

**Gen. 50:18** ¶ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said.

**Gen. 50:19-21** But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.**” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph had such a gracious response to his brothers, who had caused him years of suffering—because he saw the hand of God in it all.

John Coblenz wrote a very memorable line that impacted me greatly: “Nowhere does unbelief thrive so well as in the gloom of angry, bitter thoughts and feelings.”

He also wrote, “If ever Christians need faith, and if ever they need the warning against unbelief, it is in those circumstances when naturally they feel angry and resentful.” (Page 61 and 62)

I never equated anger with unbelief but it makes sense. Faith doesn’t seem angry, does it?

**Rom. 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to *his* purpose.

**Jer. 32:40-41 I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good.**

**James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

**2Cor. 12:10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Are you ANGRY about your circumstances? Are you angry about insults? Are you angry about your trial—or joyful? **WHO WOULD THINK THAT ANGRY PEOPLE NEED TO REPENT OF UNBELIEF?** But only FAITH can count it all joy. Only FAITH can believe that God will take even really bad things and cause them to work for our good. Only FAITH believes that even in the midst of great trials God will NEVER STOP DOING US GOOD.

It is a Bible-based response to DELIGHT in insults and persecutions. It makes no sense to the natural man. But it certainly will develop Christ-like character—perseverance—and bring you to victory.

**B. Intercession patterns.** Jesus said, **Matt. 5:44-48 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Jesus could have been angry with Peter when God showed him that Peter was going to deny him three times before the rooster crowed twice. Jesus could have said, “Simon, you total jerk, you! You are a spiritual weakling. I know what you are going to do and it really stinks!” Instead, Jesus reacted with intercession. **Luke 22:31-32 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”**

\*\*\*\* Samuel was basically rejected by the people of Israel who demanded a King. God had to tell him, “They have really rejected Me—not you” (1 Samuel 8:7). Instead of anger Samuel responded with intercession and said, **“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).**

\*\*\*\* What a wonderful habit to develop—the habit of praying for the people who offend us instead of stewing on what they have done to us. Intercession is an investment of spiritual energy whereas self-pity and anger just dissipates our spiritual energy and leaves us exhausted. By this I mean that “invested energy” actually INCREASES. Praying for the one who has hurt you will make you stronger!

**2Cor. 13:9 We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. CHOOSE TO BE A PEOPLE PERFECTOR, NOT A FLAW INSPECTOR.**

**C. Forgiveness patterns.** John Coblentz writes that forgiveness means “releasing those who do wrong to me on a personal level and laying down the demand for a “price” for their wrong.” Thus, forgiveness is a RELEASE. You release the person from the execution of judgment because of their sin toward you.

\*\*\*\* Years ago the Lord showed me that our pain is not wasted when we forgive. Instead, it is invested in the “Bank of Heaven.” When Stephen was stoned he cried, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Saul of Tarsus was the focal point of guilt but because of this prayer he became the focal point of forgiveness. It was this “release from judgment” that allowed God to take Stephen’s pain and turn it into a lightning bolt of revelation and mercy which changed Saul into a great apostle. It could have turned him into a grease spot. But Stephen had actually invested his pain in God’s bank of heaven and it paid a great dividend.

When certain people cause me a lot of pain I've often told the Lord, "Dear Father, I would really like you to use all the pain they have caused me and turn it into a revelation of Yourself to them. Change them. I'd like an apostle out of the deal instead of a grease spot." This immediately helps me avoid the curse of bitterness and unforgiveness. It gives me hope that my pain doesn't mean wasted days or wasted years—but that through forgiveness the pain can be turned into something more valuable than gold.

\*\*\*\* An old lesson, but one I need to always remember is that WE DON'T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL SOMEONE REPENTS TO FORGIVE THEM. God told me once, "Forgive him before he asks." I had said, "He hasn't repented. That's why I haven't forgiven him."

It helps to say, "Lord, I don't want them to go to hell because of what they have done to me." You can say that sincerely—and it is a great expression of RELEASE and forgiveness. But please don't NEGLECT to say that. Don't just assume you have forgiven—make it factual and actual. Express it to God clearly.

**D. Love patterns.** This means GIVING that person what they need even though they do not deserve it. It means finding a way to meet their needs. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him." What does the person you feel angry at REALLY NEED? A baseball bat to the head? No—your carnal nature needs to take revenge. What to they really need? Do they need someone to carry their luggage? Then don't just go the "one mile" the Romans required the Jews to carry luggage for a Roman soldier—carry it TWO miles. WHY? Because that's what he NEEDS.

\*\*\*\* I remember hearing a story about two Chinese Christians who carried water to their rice paddy in buckets. That night a non-Christian bored a hole and drained all their water into his rice paddy. They wanted to respond Biblically, so instead of getting angry they plugged the hole and once again worked laboriously to fill their rice paddy. Once again the enemy bored a hole and drained all that water into his rice paddy. These Christian brothers then told the Lord that they had no JOY in just plugging the hole and filling up their rice paddy again. They asked what they should do. God spoke, "FILL HIS FIRST." So instead of patching the hole and quietly filling their own rice paddy they worked feverishly to fill his. Then they filled their own.

When the man came to bore a hole and drill the water he was stunned to find his rice paddy already filled. At this he repented and became a Christian. Why? Because they had MET HIS NEED. He needed water in his rice paddy. Did he deserve it? No. But that's LOVE.

\*\*\*\* I heard of a Chinese lady who was imprisoned for her faith and beaten nearly to death. Her soul left her body, stood before Christ, and He told her, "Return to Earth and LOVE YOUR ENEMIES." That's when she started asking permission to clean the rooms of the guards who had beaten her. They lived in dirty little rooms that weren't much better than a prison cell. She polished those rooms, cleaning them with a toothbrush. One after another the guards became Christians. The whole prison was converted to Christ.

The communists came to visit the prison and were upset because everyone was so happy. They investigated to see who was at fault for all this joy. So they transferred this little lady to another prison. She witnessed for Christ—and was beaten nearly to death again. Once more she stood before Jesus and once more He said, "GO BACK TO EARTH AND LOVE YOUR ENEMIES." Once again she started cleaning the rooms of the guards—and once again the entire prison was evangelized. This happened a third time. If I remember the story correctly—after that she was martyred and enjoys the eternal bliss of heaven as a true overcomer.

**CONCLUSION:** I would like to ask you to pray for me that I might always have a truly Biblically based response to all the things that I could be angry about. Please pray for me that I will overcome and avoid emotionally-based responses that just cause bigger problems. I'd like you to pray that my love would abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that I could discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:9-11). After you pray these things for me, it would be a good idea to pray them for yourself. Just do me a little favor—and pray for me first. I thank you with all my heart. I LOVE YOU. GOD BLESS YOU.

