

Mild and Quiet Leadership

"He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:19, 20). Our Lord is quoting Isaiah 42:2 and 3. Listen to what the Puritan Matthew Henry says of Matthew 12:19: "The prediction concerning him, and his mild and quiet management of his undertaking, v. 19, 20. It is chiefly for the sake of this that it is here quoted, upon occasion of Christ's affected privacy and concealment. That he should carry on his undertaking without noise or ostentation." The promise of Christ's first coming will be mild and quiet without noise or ostentation. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown says of Matthew 12: 20: "And whereas one rough touch will break a bruised reed, and quench the flickering, smoking flax, His it should be, with matchless tenderness, love, and skill, to lift up the meek, to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, to comfort all that mourn, to say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." Matthew Henry commented on Matthew 12: 20, "What is the compassion of our Lord Jesus toward them? He will not discourage them, much less reject them or cast them off; the reed that is bruised shall not be broken and trodden down, but shall be supported, and made as strong as a cedar or flourishing palm-tree. The candle newly lighted, though it only smokes and does not flame, shall not be blown out, but blown up. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and therefore he will not despise it, but make it the day of great things, Zech. iv. 10. Note, Our Lord Jesus deals very tenderly with those who have true grace, though they be weak in it, Isa. xl. 11; Heb. v. 2." The promise of our Lord is that He will withhold much of His judgment for judgment day. In this day of grace He is loath to bring justice until His mercy has been exhausted.

I find myself at the age in life that I reflect on how I did or did not do some things. Not to become morose, there are some things I would do differently. One thing I would do differently is I would have led, especially in the area of the domestic, in a more quiet, tranquil, less noisy and ostentatious manner. As I look back I am embarrassed at some moments when I went "over the top." I write you these words not as one who always (my kids may say, rarely) practiced what I am preaching here. So allow age, now tempered hopefully with wisdom, to be our teacher here.

1. Always keep in mind if you have lost your temper, everything you say or do is tainted.

Please keep in mind I said "lost" your temper. The Bible does say, *"Be ye angry, and sin not..."* (Ephesians 4:26). Also the Bible says, *"The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue"* (Proverbs 25:23). Let's say we are dealing with a child who is playing the blame game and rather than take responsibility for their wrong doing, they blame it on a sibling and as they begin to rail against someone else, it is fine to premeditatively be firm and even give them a harsh look for their attempt to deflect from themselves.

What I am referring to is those times when we lose control. We may justify our actions such as an overwhelming voice for the fact that we are right. Yet the Bible says, *"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"* (James 1:20). Righteousness never comes from man's wrath, which is the loss of temper.

2. Words spoken in anger lacerate rather than lance.

Allow me to make a comparison. When someone is wounded and an infection occurs, sometimes a lancing of the wound needs to take place to ease the infection and speed the healing. *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend..."* (Proverbs 27:6). But when our temper is lost and we speak, it is more like a laceration that in time will need healing itself. *"A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak"* (Ecclesiastes 3:7). May God give us wisdom to know when to speak and when not to speak! In referring to one who uses their tongue incorrectly the Bible says, *"The words of a talebearer*

are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 18:8).

3. A loud demonstration of anger can make the situation worse.

"An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression" (Proverbs 29:22). In the New Testament the Bible says, *"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged"* (Colossians 3:21). The Word of God says fathers have the capacity to discourage their children. Fire begets fire. Children have a tendency to respond in kind. They will often give back to us what we give to them. Try this experiment. While talking to a friend, suddenly lower your voice and begin to talk in a whisper and the person you are talking to will usually answer you in a whisper. Why should we be surprised if someone screams to us after we have screamed to them?

I would long to be more like Jesus, who was not given to outbreaks of anger! He shall come back in glory with judgment, but until then He speaks in a still small voice to His followers. *"He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets"* (Matthew 12:19). My wife and I had only been married for a little while when I was boisterously making a fine "righteously ignited" point. I am jesting when I say righteous and furthermore I have no idea of the point I was loudly making. Outside our open plate glass window of our apartment there were a couple of guys working on their car below us. One of them hollered up to me, "Is everything okay?" I calmly said, "Everything is okay." But to him it didn't sound okay. I then wondered what kind of testimony can I now be to him? I was taught a valuable lesson that day. Another day comes to mind when my oldest son brought me to a boiling point on the Washington Mall during a July Fourth celebration. There were half a million people in attendance that day. I pulled him aside, but not out of ear shot of the crowd, and in loud tones I began to scold him. I said, "Jonathan, you'd better listen to me..." And just then a passerby said, "Yeah, Jonathan you'd better listen to your dad." I'm not really sure Jonathan heard what I said that day, but the stranger sure did. It was prophesied of Jesus, *"He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory"* (Matthew 12:19, 20). Even today, my heart breaks when I consider the times that I have let my temper guide me, rather than taking hold of my temper and guiding it in a useful purpose. Even now I dedicate myself anew and fresh to respond in the way the old Puritan Matthew Henry spoke of Jesus from our passage: "...the reed that is bruised shall not be broken and trodden down, but shall be supported, and made as strong as a cedar or flourishing palm-tree. The candle newly lighted, though it only smokes and does not flame, shall not be blown out, but blown up." May we as husbands and dads, wives and moms tenderly cup our hands around each other and our precious children, protecting them from the tempestuous winds, even gales of our own brewing and allow their little candle-light to burn brightly up into the atmosphere of the plan of God. Perhaps today would be a good day for us to pray the simple child's prayer that I slightly improvised:

Tender Jesus, meek and mild,
 Look on me, a little child;
 Help me, in Thy will,
 To recover from my angry ill.
 Amen.

- Pastor Pope -

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