

“I AM”: Slow to Anger

Eyes squint. Jaws clench. Fists tighten. Nostrils flare upon inhale.

You've seen it...ANGER!

(Expect fire upon exhale.)

If you have ever made someone really angry and that was not your intention, what a relief it was when they slowly exhaled and began to relax their fists, jaw, eyes: *Self-control*.

Better yet is the person who demonstrates self-control *before* the anger begins. They do not flare up quickly. They do not have to *cool down*; they never *heat up* in anger! The circumstances could have made the person angry, but the anger was controlled at the very beginning: *Slow to anger*.

Imagine yourself among a small group of friends. Everyone is asked to list words or phrases related to 'love.' Surely someone thinks of *compassion*; also *grace* and *kindness*. Would anyone write down, 'slow to anger'?

When God passed in front of Moses and verbally identified himself, the first few attributes expressed different facets of God's love.

The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth. --Exodus 34:6

- ◆ **Compassion** is an expression of God's love as he *withholds anger and rejection* that are truly justified.
- ◆ **Grace** is an expression of God's love as he *generously gives* when it is completely undeserved.
- ◆ **Lovingkindness** is an expression of God's love as He makes promises simply because he loves, and with that same love is loyal in keeping His promises.

(See the previous three articles for more.)

Right in middle of these love expressions is the attribute, 'slow to anger.' I cannot help but think that *slow to anger* is yet another expression of God's love.

Worded slightly differently, the expression *slow to anger* describes God as one who *takes a long time in becoming angry*; an *anger procrastinator*. It reminds me of a number of older people I have known; people who have experienced life, who understand human nature. They know something about human weakness; they understand the human dilemma. They recognize the brevity of life and know the things of life that are of value, true value. They know the futility of anger and its destructive end.

They are not unconcerned or uncaring, they simply know how to live without acting impulsively or overreacting to life's circumstances.

Isn't that a loving characteristic? Isn't it an act of love when a person does not become angry quickly? Isn't it a sign of love when a person does not lose his or her temper? We might not always 'see' the absence of impulsive anger, and as a result might not recognize the love that is there. However, it is an expression of love and it is an attribute of God.

God does not 'try' to take *a long time in becoming angry*. It is not his 'second' nature. It is not by force of will that God wrestles with himself and overcomes the impulsive flare-up of anger. It is by nature that God *takes a long time in becoming angry*. It is just the way he is.

It is as if God had said to Moses, "I AM who I am . . . I am slow in becoming angry."

Oh wait...He did!

The LORD God...slow to anger....

--Exodus 34:6