

Entitlement and Anger

1- Objectives

- ❖ We are entitled to many things yet we should consider ourselves entitled to nothing to grow spiritually.
- ❖ Anger is Ok when directed to the sin but not Ok if directed to my brethren.

2- References

- ❖ “Ten Concepts” by HH Pope Shenouda III (Concept of power)
http://www.cccnet.ca/menu/Books/HH_10Concepts.pdf
- ❖ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cPuH8jg5nQ>
- ❖ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpHSoFNHE0s>

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:4-8)

4- Lesson Guidelines

Where does entitlement come from?

- ❖ I believe that I have rights (Children and Parents; Husbands and Wives; Employers and Employees, Citizens and Government, etc.).
- ❖ I believe that rules do not apply to me. I feel my value/skills, etc. are so great, that I am exempted and because of my great value, I refuse to yield to the will of another.
- ❖ People who feel entitled, want to push their will on others, and do not accept any authority over them.
- ❖ All these things can lead to a stubborn spirit and create anger:
 - Prodigal son did not accept to wait to receive his inheritance.
 - His brother did not accept that his father would honor his prodigal brother.

What about our Lord?

- ❖ He was entitled to be worshipped, praised, obeyed, etc. He received none of these.
- ❖ He accepted the will of the Father and the crucifixion, although He was entitled to far better but in His great love for the creation, He humbled Himself from all glory.

Dangers of entitlement

- ❖ How can we love our enemies if we are “entitled” to hate them?
- ❖ How can we give of our possessions to the poor if we have “earned” them and are “entitled” to them?

How can we fight the feeling of entitlement?

- ❖ Recognize that we are entitled to nothing and everything we have is a gift that can be taken at any time for our good.
- ❖ Job said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).
- ❖ Our Lord said, “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (Luke 17:10).

Are we entitled to Freedom?

- ❖ We are not entitled to absolute freedom: We are free to do whatever we want provided that we do not impose upon the rights or freedoms of others, nor break God’s commandments or public order laid down for the safety and peace of others.
- ❖ As we ought to use our freedom in a way that does not harm others or violate the public order, we should also use our freedom in such a way as not to cause harm to ourselves. Our own self belongs to God who created it and redeemed it. It belongs also to the community that cared for us and brought us up and thus we have obligations towards it. Therefore suicide is a crime which is punished by God and rejected by law. Likewise, whoever causes himself harm through smoking or drugs.
- ❖ Real freedom is to free ourselves of our faults, bad habits and bad feelings of the heart, and to free our mind of deviating thoughts. “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).
- ❖ If we cannot rebuke a sin, we should not justify it. By justifying the behavior of sinners, we participate in their responsibility. Jezebel encouraged Ahab to oppress Naboth the Jezreelite and take his vineyard, thus making him pleased, but she damaged him spiritually and deserved the same punishment.

Are we entitled to anger?

- ❖ We are entitled to be angry but not to live in the sin of anger. David said, “Be angry, and do not sin” (Psalm 4:4). Also, St. Paul said “Be angry, and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). Such anger is a useful medicine for the soul at times of temptation.
- ❖ St. Isaiah the Solitary said: “Without anger a man cannot attain purity; he has to feel angry with all that is sown in him by the enemy.”
- ❖ Abba Evagrius the Monk said: “Anger is by nature designed for waging war with the demons and for struggling with every kind of sinful pleasure.”
- ❖ St. James said, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:1-3).

Lord Jesus Christ's anger in the temple

- ❖ “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves” (Matthew 21:12).
- ❖ It was not an emotional outburst, but a rational choice to purify the temple from any wrongdoing (He called it den of thieves) and to restore the glory due to the house of God (a house of prayers).

Children of God should be strong and not subject to anger

- ❖ A person who is subject to the sin of anger has his nerves quickly inflamed; he becomes enraged and agitated over any small word. He loses his temper and self-control, his behavior and words are offensive and he is an object of criticism by others because his nerves cannot bear the situation.
- ❖ A person who is subject to self-love and dignity is sensitive to any word and thinks it has hurt his dignity and troubled his nerves because his nerves cannot endure.
- ❖ A person who attacks others is a weak person, while he who endures is strong, like a steady mountain that is not aroused by the offenses of others. Such a mountain remains steadfast, not shaken regardless of the situation.
- ❖ The powerful is not the person who overcomes others, but he who can overcome himself. Many think themselves triumphant and powerful while they are weak and defeated within.
- ❖ The powerful does not only bear the offenses but also bears occurrences and problems. He bears the hardships which may worry others, and endures illnesses, afflictions and other hardships. The Lord Christ was powerful in His forbearance, in bearing defiance while on the cross when they said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40).
- ❖ Aggression is easy. Any person with a weak personality or weak character can attack others, but the powerful endures.
- ❖ In marital life, if the couple is weak and cannot bear each other, they may destroy their home! But if one of them at least is powerful, he can bear with the other and so peace prevails between them.
- ❖ A powerful person has self-control; can control himself whether at the time of anger or against the wish to revenge. He can also control himself against any lust or any sin fighting him.

5- Conclusion

- ❖ We are entitled to many things but we have to submit our will to the will of God even if we have to sacrifice for the benefit of others as did our Good Savior.
- ❖ We ought to be strong as children of God and to not submit ourselves to the anger that accompanies the feel of entitlement.

6- Activities / Discussion

- ❖ Discuss St. Paul saying: “Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord,

and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:4-6, 12).