

GRACE MINI-BOOK



THE
FAITH
RESPONSE

CREFLO DOLLAR

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Faith Response

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LESSON 1

THE POWER OF GODLY ANGER

When you think of anger, what comes to mind? Anger often has a negative connotation, but it is not always a bad thing. Emotions are part of who we are as human beings, and God gave them to us for a purpose. They alert us to things going on inside of us, and they also enable us to make contact with God. When channeled properly, emotions can provoke change and move us to take righteous actions. Godly anger is no different. Regardless of how strange it may sound, there is a valid biblical reason for incorporating godly anger into our spiritual authority as Believers. Normally, when we hear about anger, it is in the context of learning how to control it when it is displayed in a negative way. But anger serves a powerful purpose. Both God and Jesus demonstrated this emotion. This type of anger they displayed falls within its intended purpose. When we speak the Word of God and the devil comes against us, the right kind of anger actually helps us to resist him and cause him to flee.

Make no mistake about it; there is a type of anger that God expects us to operate in. We are called to hate evil, unrighteousness, and anything that God hates. Hate is a strong word—a word that we don't want to use in relationship to other people. But when it comes to the works of darkness and evil, we should *hate* them. Expressing our anger against evil, not against people, helps us put our authority into practice.

The Bible says that we make the devil flee from us by resisting him and submitting ourselves to God (James 4:7). God has given us all authority to resist the devil. Because we are now children of light and possess an entirely new spiritual nature that is no longer controlled by the law of sin and death, we do not have to submit to the enemy in any way, shape, or form. We are not compelled to obey him like we were before we became born again. God has given us authority over him and authority over our flesh. Through the grace of God, we do not have to sin if we don't want to.

RIGHTEOUS AND UNRIGHTEOUS ANGER

The Bible clarifies the difference between righteous and sinful anger, and the contrast between these two angers is important to understand. Righteous anger is anger that imitates God's anger, which is always controlled and always has a purpose. It is not accompanied by hatred, malice, or resentment. It is not selfish, and it expresses appropriate hate toward sin and injustice, or stems from genuine care and concern. The purpose of righteous anger is to correct or curtail destructive behavior, never to break relationships. God's anger is directed at injustice or willful disobedience. Likewise, righteous anger is always expressed on behalf of another who is oppressed, abused, or betrayed.

Human, emotional anger, in contrast, is usually uncontrolled and without patience; it is characterized by

hatred, malice, resentment, and selfishness. Sometimes anger is used as an expression of indignation. This selfish type of anger destroys individuals, is often an expression of revenge, and is intended to hurt others. It is an expression directed toward those who hurt or violate us. Sinful anger is always a reaction to offenses against us, and it often leaves a trail of destruction more devastating than any natural disaster. Nothing has destroyed more relationships and families, caused more children to rebel, or discouraged more Believers than ungodly anger. When not kept in its proper context, anger does kill and destroy.

Righteous or godly anger within us, on the other hand, is directed toward the same things, in the same way, and for the same motives as God's anger. Even when anger is a righteous response, it is to be controlled and kept in its proper place so that it does not destroy us or others by turning into bitterness. We are never allowed the freedom to take vengeance on anyone out of righteous anger, but we are to trust God to be God and to execute proper vengeance in His time. We are permitted to use the righteous and just means God has provided for us to use when dealing with offenders and offenses, not our own human methods. These God-given means may include the use of law enforcement, the court system, church discipline, godly confrontation and appeal, etc. Apart from these, we are commanded to entrust our case to Him who has both the power and right to execute

justice. Even in all these actions, we are never to be driven by hateful anger or delight in seeing our enemy suffer.

Anger is not sinful; however, the motivations and expressions of our angry emotions can be. In Ephesians 4:26, Paul tells us, “Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil.” Paul is acknowledging the emotion of anger as a part of our human experience. Even so, he admonishes us not to express the emotion of anger in sinful ways (no matter how terribly we have been wronged) and not to leave anger unresolved. He tells us in Romans 12:18, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” To the extent that we are able, we must strive for peace and actively pursue reconciliation with others. When we ignore this admonishment and fail to resolve problems instead of seeking peace on God’s terms, we give Satan a foothold into our lives and pave the way for destruction.

DESIRES OF THE HEART

The Word of God clearly teaches that all sinful anger originates in our corrupted human nature and is the outward manifestation of inward, self-motivated desires. Adverse circumstances and contrary people may cause anger in the heart to surface, but people and circumstances do not cause the anger in the heart. We like to say that people make us angry, as if someone or something held a gun to our heads

and forced us to react in anger. While circumstances may indeed provoke strong emotion in us, our individual interpretation of circumstances and our own sinful desires and choices ultimately incite sinful anger. The Bible tells us that anger arises out of our lust (selfish desires) that war in our members (within us) (James 4:1). When our hearts are filled with “I want,” “I need,” and “I deserve,” sinful anger is lurking at the door.

We will often react in anger when our desires become something we believe we are entitled to and those desires are in some way withheld from us. The desire itself is not necessarily wrong—our desires may actually be quite noble and good. The problem is the place of importance that we give to our desire and whether we are willing to sin in order to get it. A desire that has become a requirement for our happiness completely leaves God out of the equation. The place of importance we give to our desires fails to take into consideration the fact that God has sovereignly ordained us to live in an imperfect world and expects us to learn to respond to it by submitting to God’s will and ways. Anger is essentially an expression of our heart that says, “I don’t like what has just happened, and I am extremely unhappy about it.” Our feelings and our wants become the prime issue at the moment we express sinful anger—our thoughts are far from being focused on God’s work in the matter, what He wants to accomplish, or how He wants us to respond

to disappointment, injustice, the sinful behavior of others, or adversities common to life. Instead, lightning-quick thoughts along the lines of “he should” or “he shouldn’t” or “how dare he” invariably take center stage in our minds and immediately precede expressions of sinful anger.

RIGHTEOUS ANGER AND AUTHORITY

While we may want to give in to ungodly anger, there is real power in godly anger. The authority God has given us can be used effectively when we get angry at the devil for destroying people’s lives and wreaking havoc in the earth. When we believe in the power that God has given us and execute it from a place of righteous anger, we are enforcing spiritual laws and coming into agreement with the things that make God mad. He hates unrighteousness and injustice, and He hates to see people suffer at the hands of the enemy. Jesus called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all the works of the devil. When we resist Satan, we must do so forcefully, actively fighting against him. We must get angry enough at him to refuse what he is dishing out.

Nothing in God’s Word is excluded from our reach of authority, which means that it is up to us to do what is necessary to put a stop to Satan’s activities in the earth. We must believe God, know what His promises are, and enforce spiritual laws. Doing so comes from a place of godly anger and reflects the heart of the Father.

LESSON 2

THE FAITH RESPONSE

When life throws us a challenge that requires a response, there are many ways we can choose to respond. If we want a positive outcome, the response we give in the middle of that challenge is important. How we respond determines what happens next, and a faith response will always release supernatural manifestation. We can base our responses on the finished works of Jesus, who made available to us everything we will ever need for a godly life. If we do this, then our faith takes what grace has already made available to us, and we are sure to see the manifestation of what we believe.

The Old and New Testaments are full of examples of how to respond in faith. Abraham is probably one of the most notable. His faith was strong when God promised him a son. Romans 4:19, 20 says, “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.” The Word says that Abraham didn’t stagger in doubt; he believed and glorified God. Abraham was facing what appeared to be insurmountable circumstances. He had been given a promise from God that he would be the father of many nations, but his wife was barren, and he was beyond the age of being able to produce children

himself. Can you imagine what it must have been like to receive such a promise and then look at yourself and your wife's physical condition and see circumstances that were so contrary to the promise? Even still, Abraham believed. He demonstrated a faith response in the face of what appeared to be contradicting circumstances and received the promise.

Like Abraham, we must consider the promise more than we do the problem. Worry stems from focusing more on the situation than we do on the Word of God. This is not how the Believer is supposed to live. We walk by faith and not by sight, which means that no matter what we see going on in our natural situation, we believe what God says over those things.

Paul and Silas knew all about conflicting circumstances. These men of God were constantly facing persecution, imprisonment, death, and more for preaching the Gospel. Their faith was always on the line. But in Acts 16:25-28, we see them singing praises to God right in the middle of their jail cell. As they engaged the presence of God through crazy praise, the very foundations of the jail were shaken by an earthquake, a supernatural move of God on their behalf. The prisoners were set free, and the guard was preparing to kill himself because he knew what his fate would be, considering that prisoners were set free on his watch. Paul told him not to harm himself and then shared the Gospel with him. Paul and Silas were not ashamed to respond to their situation in

faith, to the point where those in the jail with them heard their praises to God. Their radical faith response resulted in God intervening in their situation.

In the Old Testament, we see the story of the faithful Shunammite woman who was not moved by her situation. She insisted on believing the promise of God. Second Kings 4:8-22 says, “And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this

season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life. And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.”

This woman was facing the loss of her son, but she knew she needed to connect with the man of God in order to receive a supernatural miracle from God. She responded in faith in the midst of a terrible situation. As a result of maintaining her faith stance, the prophet Elisha prayed for the child, and he was raised from the dead (2 Kings 4:24-37). Faith responses always get results.

One of Jesus’ most well-known recorded miracles was when He fed the multitudes with five loaves of bread and two fishes. When faced with what appeared to be shortage and lack, Jesus took a little boy’s meager resources, gave

thanks, broke the bread and gave the food to His disciples to distribute. There was enough to feed the whole crowd and plenty left over (John 6:11-13). Jesus used this as a lesson to teach us how to respond to lack and insufficiency. The final outcome was that He went from not enough to over and above.

When you are facing things that require a faith response, it is really important that you do not open your mouth and speak negative words over the situation. Responding in faith means responding with *words* of faith, even when things look differently. Remember that the spiritual realm is the “parent” realm of all natural manifestations, and if you are expecting a supernatural response you need to keep all your verbal expressions in line with only what you believe. When it appears that lack is devouring your bank account, respond in faith by declaring that God supplies all your needs according to His riches in glory through and by Christ Jesus. Keep yourself immersed in the Word of God so that you can maintain strong faith. Keep speaking the Word of God and praising God for the victory. These are your faith responses that will turn the situation around.

JESUS IS GRACE

Grace makes available to us what we can take by faith, and Jesus is Grace. The knowledge of God brings increased grace and peace. Jesus Himself has given us everything that

pertains to life and godliness; we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises, by which we are able to partake of God's divine nature and escape the corruption of the world. It is our responsibility to set our minds on the Word of God and keep them set there, refusing to adopt the world's way of thinking. God has already blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). When Jesus lives inside of us, we have all that we need for a life that is pleasing to God.

Romans 5:2 says, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Jesus is the one by whom we access this faith into grace. We can rejoice in this hope! Just like a fisherman uses a fishing pole to catch fish that are already in the pond, our faith in what grace has already done will hook us up to the manifestations.

Faith responses to life's challenges are the outworking of grace, and they demonstrate our absolute trust in the finished works of Jesus. No matter what you are facing, faith in Jesus, who is Grace, is the key to appropriating the promises of God and pulling them into the natural realm. Your faith response is going to be the key to your manifestation.

LESSON 3

THE EVIDENCE OF BELIEF

Being a Christian isn't just a bunch of talk; it is about bearing witness to God's power and love in the earth. We can't simply claim to know Christ but have no evidence of His work in our lives. Walking by faith is the key to living a vibrant Christian life, and we must have evidence of what we believe. When we live a life of grace and walk by faith, we will confess what we believe at all times and in every situation. The Law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. As Believers, verbalizing our beliefs is an automatic response to receiving what He wants to give us. Depending more on ourselves than on the finished works of Jesus takes us out of grace and back into works and self-effort, which is Old Covenant living. However, by simply accepting what Jesus did for us, we begin to see evidence of our belief every day.

In order to understand what it means to truly live by the grace of God, which allows us to show forth real evidence of what we believe, it is critical to know that there is a huge difference between the Law and grace. God's promise is of faith that it might be by grace. Abraham's faith was strong, and he believed the promise that God had given to him. He was fully persuaded that God was well able to what He had said He would do (Romans 4:16, 20, 21). Being persuaded

depends on belief, and believing is our response to grace. We cannot separate faith from grace; we have to trust Jesus in every situation.

Grace takes us out of the realm of self-effort, as it relates to securing God's promises or favor. Whatever is of grace is no more by works, and whatever is of works has nothing to do with grace. If we have to work to be righteous, then it is not righteousness by grace. Righteousness is a free gift from God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in the Son has everlasting life. This is a grace-based promise that has nothing to do with our good deeds or behavior. It is by faith alone. Belief is total dependence on something or someone. Therefore, we must commit to completely relying on Jesus for *everything* in life. This is the type of trust that gives evidence of our belief.

In addition to trust, our belief is evidenced by our ability to enter into rest. Those who believe enter into the rest of God. God's works have been finished from the foundation of the world; we are not waiting for Him to do anything else. Hebrews 4:3, 4 says that on the seventh day, He rested from His works. The Sabbath day mentioned in the Old Testament is actually symbolic of Jesus, who is our rest. While this Sabbath concept was established in the Old Testament, it was actually a type and shadow of the rest that would be made available to us under the new covenant, through Jesus. No

more striving to achieve perfection and no more attempting to get into God's good graces by our good deeds and performances. Now that Jesus has restored us to fellowship with the Father, we can rest in Him, knowing that everything we need has already been provided.

LABOR TO ENTER INTO REST

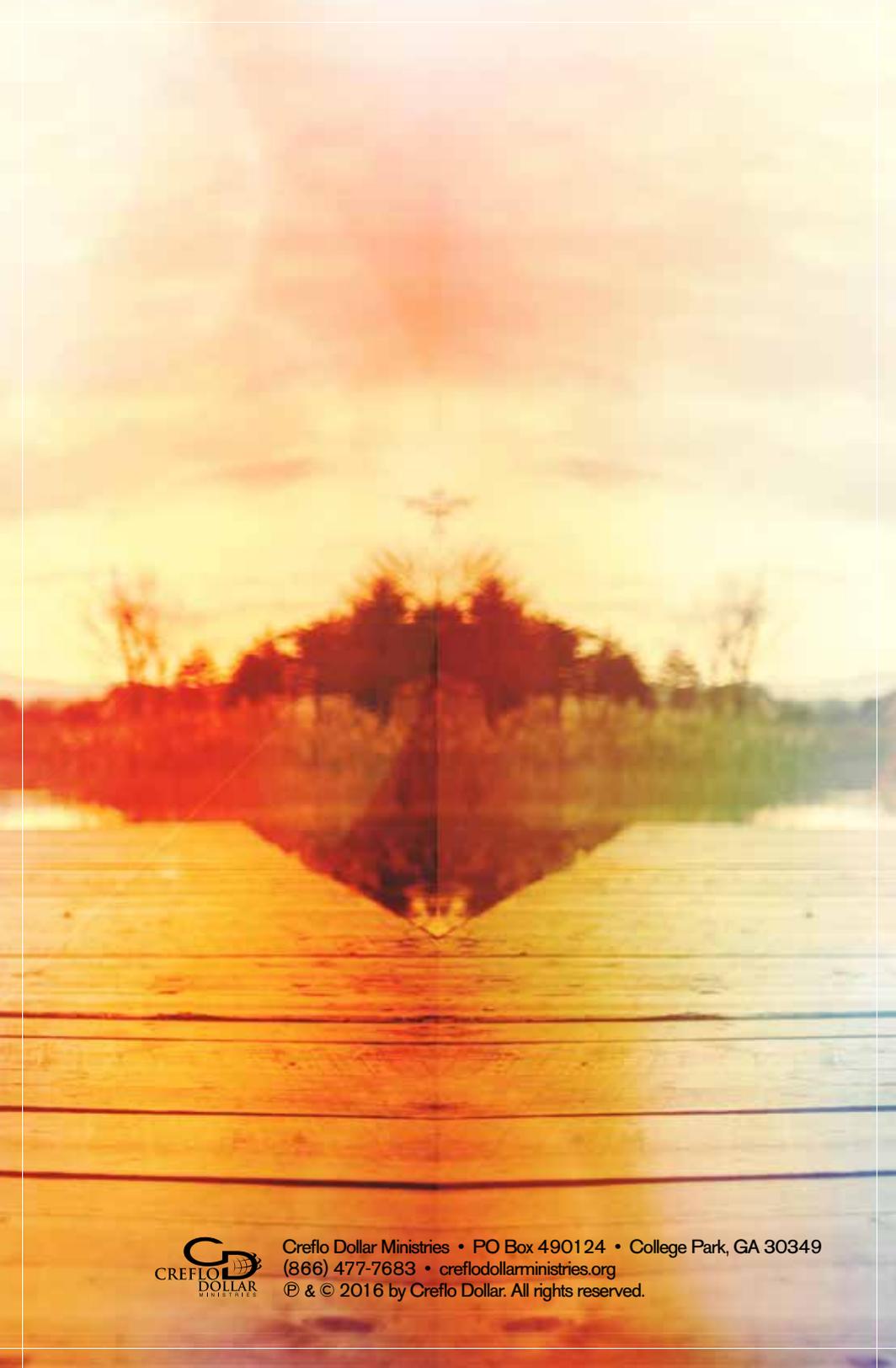
The labor that Hebrews 4:11 is speaking of is referring to the Believer pressing past the temptation to fall back into self-effort, worry, fear, and doubt about what God has done. It takes a type of "press" to overcome the emotions of anxiety and fear. Essentially, God is saying that we are to do whatever we need to do to enter into this rest. The difference between our works and grace is that we are not laboring to earn what Jesus already made available to us. We are laboring to rest, assured in His promises.

We may say that we depend on God's grace, but a careful look at the way that we're actually living our lives might show that we depend more on our own intelligence or abilities. This is why when things don't go the way we planned there is a tendency to get into condemnation. Grace is far more than a credit on your heavenly account. Grace is God acting generously in your life to do what you can't do on your own. Grace is power, and that power is the very nature of Jesus.

The evidence of your belief is going to be found in the following:

1. What comes out of your mouth
2. Relying on the finished works of Jesus and not your own ability
3. Entering into the rest of God

Practicing His presence, speaking only the Word of God in the face of challenges, praising God and giving Him thanks, and acting out on your faith are also going to show the world in whom and in what you believe. As you do these things, you will begin to flow in the rhythms of grace and see God's power work in your life. Believers believe in the grace of God more than their own strength, and our belief should be evident for the world to see. The evidence of our faith will ignite the supernatural and demonstrate to the world who God really is.



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