**DON’T MAKE ME ANGRY**

***Are You Like The Incredible Hulk?***

Young people find it hard to believe that I once was a kid. Old people now say it is hard to believe that I ever grew up. My wife might tell you that I’m still a kid. At heart, I am. If it’s true that when Jesus said of little children, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” then I’m all smiles, because that makes me a shoo-in.

As a child growing up in the 50’s and 60’s (that’s the ***19***50’s and 60’s for the smart-alecks that say I knew Abe Lincoln) I was fascinated by the Marvel Comic book characters like Captain America, The Fantastic Four, Flash, The Green Lantern, Batman and many others. I swapped these cool full-color action-packed stories with my friends, much like my cool baseball card collection. It was fun to daydream of superheroes who always came in the last minute to save the day, not to mention to save the world! It was an escape into a fantasy universe that most kids of my generation enjoyed.

But there was one super-hero that I loved to read more than any other. The Incredible Hulk! A mild-mannered Bruce Banner was calmly minding his own business, doing his boring scientific experiments with gamma rays when suddenly he accidentally shoots himself, causing him to transform into this huge green muscular “hulk” of a man who explodes in anger at all injustices in the world. The famous line he utters just before he suddenly goes through his transformation is, “Don’t make me angry. You won’t like it if I get angry.” When he erupts into passionate fury and breaks everything in sight, including brick walls, buildings, army tanks, and everything in his way, he leaves total destruction in his wake. When he finally calms down from his angry outburst he feels guilt for the mess he has caused, causing him to stay on the move all of his life in search for a cure.

Why did I “relate” to Bruce Banner, aka The Hulk? I reckon it is because I also had a terrible temper that sometimes exploded out of control. Like Bruce Banner I also felt the guilt of my explosive anger and saw the hurt I caused by the violence that came from it. I still remember, after all these years, many painful memories of what my uncontrolled temper caused to my family and my friendships. In my youth it was the worst sin that I felt I had to overcome if I was going to make it to heaven. In fact, Benita, my wife of 43 years, did not know that just before I walked out into the auditorium to say my vows of marriage, I sat in a room in the back of the auditorium and said a prayer that went something like this: “Dear Lord, before I go out there and pledge my love and my life to Benita, please help me also keep this vow too… that I hereby promise before You in heaven that I will never raise my voice in anger to her as long as I live. So help me God.”

Have I kept that promise? You will have to ask Benita. I will say this, there has been a time or two when I had to run outside, jump in the car, drive around the block, and scream to high heaven to release my anger. I’m not proud of that. To all who know sweet Benita, you know it was not in any way her doings, but my weakness of the flesh. My greatest fear has always been “flying off the handle” (as my mom used to call my outbursts… imagining an axe head hurdling at someone after coming loose from its handle). Like Banner said, “Don’t make me angry. You won’t like it if I get angry.”

Do you have a raging Hulk anger inside you? Do you physically, or just as bad verbally, abuse loved ones, workmates, schoolmates, neighbors, or friends? Do you sometimes explode at poor check-out cashiers when they don’t give you that coupon discount? Or get angry when someone cuts you off in traffic? Or blow up in holy-terror at some brother or sister in Christ who said or did something that offended you? How dare they?!!!!

The SIN (yes, s-i-n) of uncontrolled anger will destroy our marriages, our children, our work environments, our influence with neighbors, our fellowship with brethren, and most importantly our standing with God.

Anger led to Abel’s death at the hand of Cain, even with God’s warning (Genesis 4).

Anger led to Moses losing his right to enter the promised land when he struck the rock at Meribah (Numbers 20).

Anger led to Balaam striking his poor talking donkey when it was only trying to save him from a sword-carrying angel (Numbers 22).

Anger caused Haman to not see straight as he was ready to chew nails in his hatred of Mordecai (Esther).

Anger caused Ahab to seek the death of his neighbor Naboth (I Kings 21).

Anger was at the very root of Esau’s death-threats against his own brother Jacob for stealing his birthright and blessing (Genesis 25, 27).

Anger was likely the reason Jesus gave James and John the tag name Boanerges (i.e. “sons of thunder”), as they called for the Samaritans to be killed when they felt rejected. They angrily said, *‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’”* ([Luke 9:54](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%209.54)).

The apostle Paul taught us, “*Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice*.” (Ephesians 4:26-31). He repeated that in this warning, “*But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth*” (Colossians 3:8).

Bruce Banner lived a double life as The Incredible Hulk. It was like Dr. Jekyll (meek and gentle) and Mr. Hyde (wild and dangerous). Christians are not to live such a double life, appearing like Bruce Banner or Dr. Jekyll before the church, but when behind closed doors or in other public settings turning into a green monster or Mr. Hyde. How many marriages have been ruined, how many children have been ruined, how many churches have been ruined, by such uncontrolled Jekyll to Hyde, Banner to Hulk, explosive tempers? Answer, far too many! Maybe even yours.

I write this as a fellow-traveler who has had to seek God’s mercy and help in my time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16). May God help us all to answer the Savior’s invitation: *“Come unto Me and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:28-29).

Until tomorrow… ask the Incredible Savior to save you from the Incredible Hulk. He will.

I love you. - Rick