

Anger 1 – Definition and Sinful Nature

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk to you about anger. I want to do so because there are a lot of things going on in this world and our lives that tend to make us angry.
 - A. We experience anger at time with the decisions and actions of our government, our society, co-workers, friends, family, and even brethren!
 - B. And we must work to assure that we handle anger as a Christian should.
2. Anger is an emotion that is given to us by God.
 - A. I see this in how very small children, even babies, get angry!
 - B. Now, some might say that proves that we are born depraved, caused by Adam's sin being passed down to us.
 - C. Instead, I would say that anger is part of our created psychological makeup, being in and of itself neither good or bad, but finding its value or harmfulness in how it is controlled and used.
3. Controlling our anger is one of our greatest challenges. And, like the tongue, an uncontrolled anger can do much damage to our relationships.
4. So, for my benefit and all others who may struggle with this emotion while also seeking to please God, I want to present the bible's words on anger and how we are to manage it. To do that...
 - A. I want to define anger, seeing it's not as simple as it might seem.
 - B. I want to look at when anger becomes sin.

BODY:

I. What is anger?

- A. Defined:
 1. A strong feeling of displeasure; syn. wrath, ire, rage, fury, indignation (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)
 2. A strong passion or emotion of displeasure or antagonism, excited by a **real or supposed injury or insult** to one's self or others, or by the intent to do such injury (*Webster's Dictionary*)
- B. Paul tell us much concerning anger (Eph. 4:26-27, 31 – “Be angry (orgizo), and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger (parorgismos),²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity...³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath (thumos) and anger (orgē) and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” – NASB).
 1. Paul instructs us that there are **stages** of anger:
 - a. *Orgizo* (from orgē) to be angry – a *reasoned* state of mind which is aroused or provoked to the point of being indignant or enraged.
 - i. Jesus' anger at the Pharisees was the product of a reasoned state of mind (Mark 3:5 – “And when He had looked around at them with anger (orgē), being grieved by the **hardness of their hearts**, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.”).
 - ii. Jesus was angry because these were the religious leaders of Israel and had much influence and should have known better. Instead, their hearts were full of evil with no desire to change (3:6 – “Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.”).
 - b. *Parorgismos* (a stronger form of *orgē*) a cherished anger, *embittered* wrath harbored and brooded over in the heart with *strong emotion*.
 - i. This anger is not a quick response, but is brooded over, allowed to “stew”!
 - ii. If anger is allowed to continue in the heart, it will *grow* and put one in danger of losing control.
 - c. *Thumos* – wrath, passion, heat, anger that boils up (strongly) and erupts suddenly and then soon subsides (*Thayer*).
 2. Paul also instructs us concerning the nature of anger and how to address it.

- a. We can be angry, possibly quite angry, without sinning.
- b. But, this requires that our anger end in our hearts by nightfall. It can't be allowed to be brooded over, seeing it opens the door for Satan to control us!
- c. Because of the danger anger poses, Christians are commanded to put away anger (*orgē*) and wrath (*thumos*) from their lives—to not allow it to be part of their character!

II. When is anger sin?

- A. This is important question because Eph. 4:26 says we can be angry and not sin. So, when does anger become sin.
- B. Anger becomes sin when it is *comes easily and habitually*.
 - 1. If I have learned anything in my many years, it is that people, even brethren, can be far too eager to react in anger to emotionally charged situations!
 - 2. This is one of the reasons we are told to never be eager, or inclined, to get angry.
 - a. Christians are be slow to anger because it does not produce righteousness (James 1:19-20 – “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger (*orgē*); ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” – NASB).
 - i. The NKJV has “wrath” here, likely in hopes of clarity—thinking that it is wrath that doesn't produce righteousness.
 - ii. But, the passage is just addressing anger in general, seeing anger is not a characteristic that generally results in righteousness!
 - b. Being quick to anger is a trait of fools (Eccl. 7:9 – “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.”)!
 - i. For the Bible to describe someone as a **fool** is not done without great care.
 - ii. So, to describe an angry person as a fool should carry considerable weight with us.
 - 3. So, if we find ourselves reacting in anger on a regular basis, we may have allowed anger to take control of us and we need to repent.
- C. Anger becomes sin when it results in *contemptible words and actions* (Matt. 5:22 – “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”).
 - 1. The ESV, NASB, HCSB leave out “without a cause” because the oldest Greek manuscripts exclude it, though most Greek manuscripts and early translations have it.
 - 2. Either way, this is anger is sinful because it is acted out in unjustifiable fashion, for...
 - a. It puts one in danger of being *judged*. Of course, if it is without a cause, the anger itself is sin.
 - b. It expresses itself in abusive language (i.e., **Raca** – empty head, useless, idiot, imbecile; **Fool** – foolish, senseless).
 - 3. This becomes a real issue in this day of emotionally charged politics and polarized societal views, where I myself have been quick to describe the left, especially those who ceaselessly champion great evil, as being fools, idiots, and morons!
 - a. Those words, although easily spoken, do not suit well coming from the Christian!
 - b. And, such anger spewing from our lips does not present the proper example of a Christian to the world!
 - 4. We must be extra careful that anger does not cause us to treat our brethren with contempt (Jas. 4:11-12 – “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?”).
 - 5. So, anger that produces demeaning words and contemptible behavior toward another, whether the anger is justified or not, will endanger our soul!
- D. Anger is sinful when motivated by *jealousy* and *pride*.

1. This sinful anger was expressed by the prodigal son's brother concerning his return and the celebration that followed (Luke 15:28-30 – "But he [the brother, rp] was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.'³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'").
 - a. *Jealousy* – "you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends" (14:29)
 - b. *Pride or arrogance*—"I never disobeyed your command"—and his contempt towards his brother (15:30).
 2. Anger provoked by jealousy and pride will blind us, as it did this brother,...
 - a. To the wonderful blessing we already enjoy (15:31 – "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.'").
 - b. To what is right (15:32 – "It was **fitting** to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'").
 3. Anger produced by jealousy and pride is polluted, making our anger more about ourselves than what is true and right.
- E. Anger becomes sinful when it **flares up in heated passion, or wrath**, even if it quickly dissipates (Gal. 5:19-21 – "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath (*thumos*), selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.'").
1. Here the word is *thumos* and refers, as above, to heated passion that flares up quickly and often resides just a quickly.
 - a. It would be foolish and wrong to assume that because one's fiery anger flares up and dissipates quickly that the damage it causes goes away just as quickly!
 - b. More damage is often done in these short, fiery outbursts than in prolonged anger. For, at least a person may have time to consider their actions and response.
 - c. We see the danger of this in the people's *wrath* at Jesus' teaching, which quickly resulted in their attempting to kill Him (Lk. 4:28-29 – "So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were **filled with wrath** (*thumos*),²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.'").
 2. Understand that wrath is a very dangerous emotion, both physically and spiritually. So, God says those who allow these *outbursts* to become their *practice* will not enter heaven!
- F. Anger is sinful when it **keeps us from forgiving others as Christ has forgiven us** (Eph. 4:31-32 – "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.'").
1. Note the contrast in the actions and attitudes of 4:31 and 32.
 - a. In 31 we are told to put away various negative, harmful, and destructive emotions (bitterness, anger, wrath) that are also connected to negative, harmful, and destructive actions (clamor [loud quarreling], evil speaking, all malice [evil intent]).
 - b. In 32 the Christian is told to turn those negative, destructive emotions and attitudes into beneficial and graceful responses (kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness) that help the spiritual development, wellbeing, and overall lives of our fellow men.
 2. So, when anger is harbored resulting in the withholding of kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness, we are forgetting Christ's response to us as sinners and acting sinfully.
 3. And that, my friends, will not abide well for us in the day of judgment (Matt. 6:12, 14-15 – "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...¹⁴ "For if you forgive men their

trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. We learned that anger:
 - A. Is the feeling, or emotion, of strong displeasure with someone or something.
 - B. It is a God-given emotion and is not sinful in and of itself.
 - i. Jesus himself became angry at certain individuals.
 - ii. And, as we shall see in the next lesson, God expects us to become angry when God, His ways, and His people are maligned.
 - C. Is very serious and often dangerous emotion that can easily lead us to sin!
 - i. For, anger when allowed to stay in the heart can open the door to Satan to take control and produce further sin.
 - ii. Thus, it must be controlled, even when our anger is *completely justified*.
2. We need to avoid anger in most cases, but especially that which becomes sinful because it...
 - A. Has become an easy and habitual part of our lives.
 - B. Lashes out at others with contemptible words and actions.
 - C. Is motivated by jealousy and pride.
 - D. Flares up quickly in heated outbursts leading to more sinful action
 - E. Keeps us from forgiving others as Christ has forgiven us.
3. So, you should ask yourself whether anger has caused sin in your life, requiring that you be forgiven by God's grace?
4. You can find that grace and forgiveness in Christ today if you will come to Christ in F-R-C-B-LF.