

## Managing Anger

TEXT: Various

THESIS: We need to rid ourselves of the outburst of anger and that which settles in our hearts.

### INTRODUCTION

1. Angry words
  - a. Angry words! O let them never from the tongue unbridled slip; may the heart's best impulse ever check them ere they soil the lip.
  - b. Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far, for a moment's reckless folly thus to desolate and mar.
  - c. Let our words be sweetly spoken, let kind tho'ts be greatly stirred; show our love to one another with abundance of kind words.
2. The song angry words is a song that is loved by many because of what it teaches.
  - a. In fact, a brother in Christ, who was a colonel in the Marines, saw many things due to the wars he fought in, the company he was around and often thought of this song to comfort his Christians soul.
3. It seems that anger is an uncontrollable problem.
  - a. It destroys families (Gen. 4:1-9).
  - b. It destroys nations (Exo. 5:1-7).
  - c. It destroys the church (1 Cor. 6:1-10).
  - d. And, it destroys the individuals (1 Ki. 19:1-3; 2 Ki. 9:30-35).
4. Indeed, anger is a common problem among the world.
  - a. In a Newsweek article entitled, "Better Temper That Temper!," it raised the questions:
    - i. Is it best to just let off steam which is said to reduce blood pressure, but produces hostility in others?
    - ii. Or, is it best to suppress one's anger which raises blood pressure, but prevents hostility?
  - b. When was the last time you studied the subject of anger from a Biblical perspective, which for the Christian provides the final word for all things including human behavior?
5. I would like to look at:
  - a. An overall look at anger.
  - b. A close examination of anger.
  - c. Put away anger and wrath.

### DISCUSSION:

- I. AN OVERALL LOOK AT ANGER
  - A. In the Old Testament, especially in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, there is a lot to say about anger.
    1. "A fools wrath is presently known" (Prov. 12:16).
    2. "Soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov. 15:1).

3. "A wrathful man stirs up strife" (Prov. 15:8) and etc . . .
  4. But, there are two passages that I want to focus on which provides a warning:
    - a. First, Prov. 14:17 tells us, "A man of quick temper acts foolishly"
      - (1) This is a man who is undisciplined and out of control.
      - (2) He is unpredictable and passionately hotheaded which clouds his judgment and robs him of all sense of proportion so that he overreacts.
      - (3) He overflows his own sides like a boiling kettle and is irrational, an evildoer.
        - (a) Solomon said, "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out." (Prov. 17:14)
        - (b) Sadly these individual harm others and themselves.
    - b. The second verse is Eccl, 7:9 which states, "Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools."
      - (1) Anger here arises from being impatient.
      - (2) The text is saying to not be angry because if you are, you show yourself to be a fool.
      - (3) This fool is one who is under the dominion of his own temper.
      - (4) He/she harbors and lets it fester inside until they see the need to make others suffer, then excreting full revenge on those whom they deem their enemies.
  5. The psalmist sums this up when he penned, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret--it only causes harm." (Psa. 37:8).
- B. Now, in the New Testament, it appears anger is not compatible with the Christian disposition.
1. Anger and wrath are to be replaced by kindness and forgiveness.
    - a. The Bible states, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4:31-32).
    - b. Again, we are told to put off anger, wrath and malice (Col. 3:8).
    - c. James tells us, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jam. 1:19-20).
  2. Now, we also can see from the New Testament that there appears to be a place for a certain kind of anger.
    - a. For example, Jesus expressed anger on several occasions:
      - (1) Toward the money changers in the temple (Jn. 2:13-17).
      - (2) Toward the hypocritical Pharisees (Matt. Mt 23:13ff).
    - b. Another example is that God is a God of anger as well as a God of

love (Eph. 5:6).

- C. Now, many are quick to point out Paul's writings in Eph. 4:26 and how we cannot be angry and we will get to those in a minute.
- D. For now, consider this: How do we reconcile those passages which demand anger be put off with those which speak of anger on the part of God, Christ, and the Christian?
  - 1. We need to take:

## II. A CLOSER LOOK AT ANGER

- A. When concerning the anger of God, God's anger is always a just reaction to evil.
  - 1. Consider two passages:
    - a. Rom. 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;"
      - (1) Here we have the ungodly who fail to love and obey God.
      - (2) They do not honor God, but themselves and so God is angry with such men.
    - b. Rom. 2:5-9, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;"
      - (1) God judges according to truth and since He does not show partiality, when one continues in sin, the day will surely come, when God's judgment will be inflicted upon them.
      - (2) For God is a righteous ruler.
  - 2. And, His wrath, His displeasure is never misguided.
    - a. He is therefore capable of properly manifesting anger.
  - 3. Now man, with all of our imperfections, we are not so capable.
    - a. Our anger is often misguided and misdirected.
    - b. And because of ignorance, we often make false presumptions, misunderstanding, etc and we do not always display a just reaction.
- B. Now when concerning the anger of Christ, in the examples of His anger, there is nothing of self-interest.
  - 1. Instead, only holy anger is displayed against unrighteousness which is abhorrent to God.
  - 2. He could be angry, but only for God's honor.
    - a. When personally abused, He said nothing.

- b. In fact, 1 Pet. 2:21-23 states, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:”
      - c. But when it was against God, He displayed righteous anger (as in the temple).
    - 3. Now, with man, again in our imperfectness, we do not always properly use anger.
      - a. Many times we remain silent when sin is exalted and God is dishonored.
      - b. Then, we get angry when someone offends us personally!
      - c. We have our priorities in the wrong place when this happens.
- C. Now, concerning what Paul wrote in Eph. 4:26-27, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil,”
  - 1. We cannot ignore the context of this verse.
  - 2. Paul is telling us that if anger comes to the heart...
    - a. It must be controlled ("do not sin...nor give place to the devil")
    - b. It must be dispelled before nightfall ("do not let the sun go down on your wrath")
  - 3. Now, in comparing this with the meaning of the Greek words often translated "anger" and "wrath"
    - a. Thumos (Eph. 4:31), most often translated "wrath" means, “wrath throughout.”
      - (1) This word shows that this anger is the sudden outburst of passionate anger, the blaze of temper which flares into violent words and deeds, and just as quickly dies.
      - (2) It is this human anger that is to be avoided.
    - b. Then there is orgizo, often translated "anger" and means, “to make angry.”
      - (1) This anger is an enduring state of mind, an outrage which has arisen gradually and becomes more settled in ones mind, corrupting it.
  - 4. Now, these two words show their perfect harmony here in Eph. 4:26-27 (anger-orgizo) and in Eph. 4:31 (wrath-thumos).
    - a. Both are in perfect harmony even if one says it is O.K. to be angry and the other says it is wrong to be angry.
    - b. Because:
      - (1) Eph. 4:31 states, "do not sin" - i.e., don't let anger become wrath (outburst of anger), which is sin.
      - (2) Eph. 4:26, “do not let the sun go down on your wrath” - i.e., don't let anger remain and become settled, for that is also a

sin.

5. The point is simply this:
  - a. It is wrong to "blow off steam" which is the idea involved in the word thumos because this word also means, "outbursts of anger"
  - b. Also, it is wrong to "have a lasting, suppressed anger" which is the idea involved in the word orgizo, anger.
- D. But if it is wrong to be angry or to display wrath, is it humanly possible to remove these emotional reactions to trying and difficult situations?
  1. Yes!
  2. But only as we undergo a "transformation."

### III. PUTTING AWAY ANGER AND WRATH

- A. A transformation takes place when a person becomes a Christian and begins living the life of the Christian.
  1. A change is now possible for as the Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).
    - a. This change involves many things, one of which is our relation to sin.
      - (1) Before becoming a Christian, we were "slaves of sin" (Rom. 6:17).
      - (2) Now being a Christian, we can be "free from sin" (Rom. 6:18).
    - b. Now, this does not mean that we cannot or do not sin.
      - (1) Only that we do not "have to sin" (Rom. 7:14-24)
      - (2) We are now free to present ourselves to God, to serve as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:11-14,19).
  2. So, when a Christian willingly presents himself to God, transformation is possible!
    - a. It is made possible by "renewing your mind" (Rom. 12:1-2)
    - b. This renewing of our minds occurs as we:
      - (1) Are, "... risen with Christ," seeking "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." And, "setting our affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).
      - (2) This renewing occurs as we behold the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).
    - c. Thus, with a mind being renewed in this way, it becomes possible...
      - (1) It becomes possible to put off things like anger, wrath (Col. 3:8-11).
      - (2) It becomes possible to put on things like kindness, love, the peace of God (Col. 3:12-15).

- (a) Things which in themselves prevent anger and wrath from becoming a part of our lives.
    - (b) Especially the "peace of God", which if allowed to rule in our hearts, it will give us the inner calm and harmony we need in trying times!
  - (3) Crucial to putting on such things as "peace" is the Word of God and prayer!
    - (a) Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn. 14:27).
    - (b) "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33).
    - (c) "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6-7).
- 3. Being transformed leads to reacting differently.
  - a. Before we were Christians, before being transformed, we reacted according to the works of the flesh, with anger and wrath (Gal. 5:19-21).
  - b. But the more we as Christians are transformed into the image of Christ, the more we will react according to the fruit of the Spirit, with kindness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).
- B. Now, when dealing with the subject of anger, during the process of transforming our lives through the Word of God and prayer, it does not hurt to benefit from suggestions which complement what the Bible teaches.
  - 1. Seneca, a Roman philosopher and educator (4-65 A.D.), offered the following self-control techniques in his book "Of Anger"...
    - a. Avoid frustrating situations by noting where you got angry in the past (Matt. 26:41; Prov. 4:14-15).
    - b. Reduce your anger by taking time, focusing on other emotions (pleasure, shame, or fear), avoiding weapons of aggression, and attending to other matters (Phil. 4:8).
    - c. Respond calmly to an aggressor with empathy or mild, unprovocative comments or with no response at all (Prov. 15:1).
    - d. If angry, concentrate on the undesirable consequences of becoming aggressive (Psa. 37:8).
      - (1) Tell yourself: "Why give them the satisfaction of knowing

- you are upset?"
      - (2) Or "It isn't worth being mad over."
    - e. He goes on to say, reconsider the circumstances and try to understand the motives or viewpoint of the other person (Phil. 2:3-4).
    - f. Train yourself to be empathic with others (2Tim. 2:24-26).
      - (1) Be tolerant of human weakness
      - (2) Be forgiving (ask yourself if you haven't done something as bad).
      - (3) Follow the "great lesson of mankind: to do as we would be done by" (Matt. 7:12).
- 2. In addition to this, we can control anger by:
  - a. Reducing our frustrations.
    - (1) Find the source of your frustration, whether they be people or subjects or situations.
    - (2) Attempt to reduce or eliminate your exposure to these negative stimuli.
  - b. Control anger by reducing violent stimuli in your life.
    - (1) Choosing to avoid violent movies, games and violent and aggressive friends.
    - (2) Be very selective with what you are around so that they do not encourage you into anger and rage.
  - c. Control anger by revealing yourself and understand others.
    - (1) Announce you may be having a bad day to others.
    - (2) Otherwise, how will we as Christians be able to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)?
  - d. Control anger by not escalating the violence.
    - (1) Aggressive action on your part may cause an equally aggressive response which starts a vicious cycle.
    - (2) Often, it is best to walk away.
  - e. Control anger by converting your violent reaction into thinking of the source of the aggravation and whether a violent reaction will accomplish any purpose other than remorse, which is not a goal.
  - f. Control anger by ceasing to use your temper to get your way.
- C. There are many ways one can control anger, but we need to look at heaven first and the Word of God to help us control it.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Instead of trying to determine whether we should react to difficult situations by either letting off steam or by suppressing one's anger, the goal of the Christian should be that of changing the inner person because, the more we are transformed, the more likely we will react with love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

2. Following the example of Christ, there may be a place for anger, but only in things pertaining to the honor and will of God; in all other things, we do well to remember:
  - a. The example of Jesus - 1Pe 2:23, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."
  - b. The words of David - Ps 37:8, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret-- it only causes harm."
  - c. Let us "cease from anger, and forsake wrath" by presenting ourselves to God, allowing our minds to be renewed as we behold His glory revealed in the Bible.
3. Do you wish to be a "new creation"?
  - a. You must be "in Christ" (2 Co 5:17), and that begins by being baptized "into Christ" (Ga 3:27).
  - b. If you are already in Christ, but have difficulties controlling anger, or submitting to the will of God, then come forward.