

What the Bible says about

ANGER

Cease from anger and forsake wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.

(Psalm 37:8)

He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.

(Proverbs 14:29)

Anger is rooted in not being able to get your own way. You are left in a world with seven billion sinners like you, and the selfishness of others burdens your life with many labors and inconveniences. You are trying your best to make it through life, and you find yourself thwarted by tickets, traffic lights, automotive breakdowns, unexpected bills, government authority, work issues, medical problems, etc. All these things get in the way of what you want to do. Your expectations and hopes are dashed. Life does not seem to be fair.

Much of the anger people experience is against self, although it is projected upon other people, things, and events. Because of poor personal choices, you might not be as rich, talented and popular as you had hoped to be. You expected to be a millionaire by age thirty, but you find yourself

in a low-paying, dead-end job. For this reason many lash out at society.

Some anger is fueled by personal sin. You may be angry over God-given responsibilities. Some men want the blessing of a wife but do not want to be tied down. They covet other women, and they are angry when they can't have them. Some parents want the blessing of children, but they hate the inconvenience of child rearing. They explode over their children's actions because they secretly feel their life is interrupted by children. Much anger flows out of selfishness – "I want my plans, my comforts, my freedoms, and my control."

You may be angry at God. Some folks believe God has either not given them what they need or has unjustly taken something away. They view God as having thwarted their freedom and happiness. This anger may not even be visible. It is often a subconscious enmity toward God that reveals itself in either a disinterest in God or an automatic cursing of the name of God every time something goes wrong.

Anger can exist under the guise of religion. There can be anger against those who do not follow rules of religious dogma or cultural traditions. Religions that are man-made can be legalistic, self-righteous, and unforgiving. The outcome is a superiority complex followed by self-righteous anger. Remember, it was the religious clergy that crucified Christ out of anger and envy.

There is a form of righteous anger called "righteous indignation." This is the anger that God has toward evil and the anger Jesus displayed when he threw the moneychangers out of the temple. Anger was originally a God-given, healthy emotion to move us to righteous action. Mankind, not being holy like God, misuses anger. You can be sure that almost all the anger coming from within us is tainted with sinful motives. The Biblical book of James teaches that man's typical anger does not measure up to God's standards, nor does it produce righteous results.

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

(James 1:19-20)

If anger is left to simmer in the heart long enough, it results in an *angry personality type*. These are individuals who have harbored anger for so long that it shows in their face, their tone of voice, and even their outlook on life. Such people can be negative, pessimistic, sarcastic, mean and violent. While some conceal their anger by clamming up, others yell and threaten in order to get compliance and control.

When spiritually healthy people have feelings of anger, they generally set those feelings aside as being bad thoughts. *Angry personality types* like the anger, feed on the anger, and feel completely justified in their anger. The sinful flesh loves the feelings of anger.

Anyone can be caught in the bondage of anger, but it is especially prevalent in those who have grown up getting their own way or in those who have been academically taught to have a sense of entitlement. These are often intelligent people. Ignorance is bliss, but the more you know about how the world works, the more you see that you have been affected for ill – hence, more anger.

How Serious is Anger?

Anger is a violation of God's law. The people in Jesus' day thought they were okay because, as many even say today, "At least I haven't murdered anyone." Jesus taught that the sin of anger is just as condemning because anger is the root attitude.

You have heard that the ancients were told, "You shall not commit murder" and "Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court." But I [Jesus] say to you that

everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court. (Matthew 5:21-22)

You will never overcome anger until you admit it is a terrible evil that must be eradicated at all costs.

What is Really Going On in Anger?

All anger is ultimately directed against God because people intuitively know that God is responsible for all things. If God so willed, He could have prevented certain bad events and bad people in your life; He could have caused you to be born handsome, intelligent and rich. **Anger is a failure to submit to God's will for your life.** Anger is holding on to rights that should be surrendered to God. You think you deserve something, but God knows otherwise.

Cain

The first example of anger in the Bible is when Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, who became angry at his brother Abel.

But for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. (Genesis 4:5)

Cain's offering was rejected because Cain did not obey God's offering requirements. Cain, thinking he was wiser than God, wanted to do religion his own way. Many follow the footsteps of Cain and are angry at (1) God's standards of righteousness, and (2) God's way of salvation through Jesus the Messiah. They suppose that if they were in charge of the universe, they would have come up with a better plan.

Jonah

The prophet Jonah is a prime example of how even those who profess religion can possess a bad

attitude. Jonah wanted God to destroy the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Certainly, he did not understand God's compassion and patience. Jonah was filled with spiritual pride in that he considered himself more worthy of mercy than the Ninevites. God taught Jonah a lesson by providing for him a shade tree and then taking it away. By his anger, Jonah showed that he was more interested in what benefited him rather than in what benefited God and others.

Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." (Jonah 4:9)

Anger is a battle with God. The angry man does not accept what has come into his life as being right and necessary. Because of mankind's sin and God's desire to save us from sin, God has put us in a world where we have to experience things that are unpleasant. Our goal might be prosperity and ease, but God's goal is our humility, love, and righteousness.

God knows that our lives must be touched by the sins of others so that we learn to see and hate sin in ourselves. We need trials to make us appreciate our weakness; we need to work by the sweat of our brow to learn gratitude; we need inconveniences to teach us patience and mercy; we need to make sacrifices to learn love.

So much of what God is allowing in the world irks us – not because He is wrong, but because we are ignorant. We begin in rebellion to His authority because we want independence from God. We think we can do just fine without Him. When He lets us experience the bad consequences of a world living independently of God, we foolishly respond in anger.

Anger is a sign that your knowledge of God and your relationship with God is deficient.

The Cure

God wants you to submit to His sovereign Lordship and acknowledge that what He does is always right and good. Once you do this, you will have true peace.

1. **Admit that anger is a sin.** Give up your supposed right to be angry. Instead embrace meekness and humility.

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech . . . put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:8, 12)

2. **Believe that God brings bad things into your life for good.** Those things that appear to hurt you, or thwart your plans, are sent by God to help you. Believe in the good purpose although you may not see it now. Never again say, "Bad circumstances and bad people are ruining my life."

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

3. **Rejoice in hardships, for in these you have a reward from God.**

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven... (Luke 6:20-23)

4. **Be thankful for what you have been given knowing that God rewards you according to your faithfulness, not your gifts.** Therefore, let

thankfulness replace feelings of resentment. In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught that each servant was given a different quantity of talents.

For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one... (Matthew 25:14-15)

God gives everyone different opportunities and responsibilities. What you have in this life has very little to do with your eternal reward. In God's economy, "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." Serve God faithfully despite your limitations.

Is It Easy to Submit to God?

Because of unbelief and a desire for control and independence, it is very difficult to say to God, "I will be satisfied with whatever You bring into my life." Your mind will conjure up all sorts of justification for holding on to your anger and your ongoing battle with God. But to have peace you must say, "God, you are right and I am wrong."

The Bible teaches that this change of attitude is not something you can create on your own. All the education in the world cannot change your willful rebellion. First, God must supernaturally change your nature. This is called "conversion" or the "new birth." When you confess your sin and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, God changes the core desires of your soul.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Second, anger can never be replaced with joy unless you actually have God's future reward. None of the trials and disappointments on earth can have any positive benefit if you are outside the family of God. The Bible says "all things work together for good to those who love God," but for those that do not love God, all things turn into a curse.

All your disappointments in life are meant to lead you back to God. Life was never meant to be lived apart from your Creator. Satan wants you to be angry at your circumstances and, thereby, alienate you from God. Instead, use every occasion that tempts you to be angry as an opportunity to draw closer to God.

It is understandable why those who have never walked with God cannot see how living for God brings peace. But if you take steps toward God in Bible study, church attendance, and Christian fellowship, He will open for you a whole new way of life.

You have two paths before you: The way of **rebellion and anger** or **submission and peace**. May God give you the faith to choose the way of the Lord.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them. (Hosea 14:9)

B.E. Winship

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