

Overcoming Sin (Part 4)

Anger

Ephesians 4:26-27

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. 3 Everyone gets angry from time to time; it's a natural way to react when certain things happen to us.
 - A. The Bible often talks about the anger of God (e.g., Num. 11:1: *"Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp."*).
 - B. Jesus also became angry (Jn. 2:13-17).
 - C. The Bible even tells us we can be angry, IF we do it in the correct way! **Eph. 4:26-28:** *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil."*
2. 4 How then can we identify anger as a sin we need to overcome? There are two Greek words translated as "anger" in the NT.
 - A. The first word is *orge*, and originally it referred to any natural impulse, desire or disposition. In time it came to signify anger as being the strongest of all passions (Eph. 4:31; 36 times in KJV-NT and most often translated *wrath*).
 - B. The second word is *thumos*, and indicates an even more agitated condition, an outburst of wrath resulting from inward indignation; a strong emotion that blazes up quickly and then, just as quickly, subsides (Gal. 5:20; 18 times in KJV-NT and most often translated *wrath*).
 - C. The difference is this: *thumos* is volatile in its manifestation, while *orge* is deep-seated and long lasting in nature. Neither is a characteristic fitting for a Christian.
3. 5 Anger is like a fire; if controlled it can do much good (heat, warmth). However, if it gets out of control it can be highly destructive (e.g., burn down your house). Same is true for anger:
 - A. Some control their anger better than others which enhances their ability to be a good influence.
 - B. Some Christians, on the other hand, have a more difficult time controlling their anger. This is not the way God wants His children to act and it can destroy one's influence for good.
4. Let's examine the Scriptures and consider some reasons why it is wrong to give in to anger and then consider some things we can do to overcome our problems with anger.

II. Discussion:

I. 6 What's wrong with uncontrolled anger?

- A. ** **Anger can lead to sin (Eph. 4:26-28:** *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil."*).
 - (1) This passage is not giving us a license to be angry, but warning us of the connection between anger and sin.
 - (2) Remember, anger is one of the strongest of man's passions; therefore, it can easily get the best of us if we're not very careful (I know! I lose my temper from time to time.).
 - (3) So we are not to let our anger get out of control, blind us of our good common sense and reason, and lead us to sin (**Prov. 29:22:** *"An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression."*).
 - (4) Remember Cain's reaction to God's rejecting his offering? **Gen. 4:6-7:** *"...He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.'"*

- (a) God warned Cain his anger was opening the door to sin...and it did! V. 8: he “*rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*”
- (b) The same thing can happen to us! Anger is a very dangerous emotion that provides a strong avenue for temptation and sin (**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. 7 Anger resides in the same place in the heart as murder (Matt. 5:21-22).

- (1) First, notice Jesus says those who are angry at their brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment. There are legitimate reasons to be angry at someone, but there are severe consequences for being angry “*without a cause.*” (e.g., When someone does the same thing you would have done!)
- (2) Second, Jesus says the one who is angry without a cause is in danger of the judgment just as the one who has committed murder. Don't miss this point!
 - (a) Why? Anger without a cause and murder come from the same place (i.e., a bad heart!).
 - (b) That's what happened to Cain. He was angry at Abel “*without cause.*” He let that emotion lead him all the way to murder.
 - (c) Because of this connection, John wrote: “*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*” (1 John 3:15)

C. 8 Anger is condemned as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

- (1) Notice Paul names “*hatred*” and “*outbursts of wrath*” as “*works of the flesh*” that will condemn us to hell!
- (2) Some Christians say things like: “I may be a hothead. I may have a short fuse. I may fly off the handle and give people a piece of my mind, but that is just the way I am.”
 - (a) No, that's not the “*way we are,*” that's the way we choose to be.
 - (b) One who lives this way is one who is led by the “*flesh*” and not by the “*Spirit*” (Rom. 8:5).
 - (b) Uncontrolled anger is a very serious thing! It will keep us out of heaven!

D. 9 Anger is the characteristic of a fool (Eccl. 7:9: “*Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.*”).

- (1) Anger leads to foolishness and brings shame (**Prov. 12:16:** “*A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.*”)
- (2) Think about your own life? When have you made the biggest fool of yourself? Probably when you spoke or acted out of anger.
- (3) A prudent/wise person realizes the foolishness and shame of anger and seeks to control it.

E. 10 Anger's fruits are hard to overcome.

- (1) Anger produces a very bitter fruit (**Prov. 30:33:** “*For as the churning of milk produces butter, and wringing the nose produces blood, so the forcing of wrath produces strife.*”).
- (2) Strife is a heavy burden for ourselves and those around us (**Prov. 27:3:** “*A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool's wrath is heavier than both of them.*”).
- (3) Unfortunately, many who have a problem with uncontrolled anger never seem to learn from their mistakes (**Prov. 19:19:** “*A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.*”)
- (4) They continue to act out their anger, and thus continue to bring shame and hardships upon themselves and others.

- (5) Remember last Sunday's lesson and our points on self-control? We are the only ones who can tell ourselves "NO!"

F. **11 Anger does not accomplish the will of God (James 1:19-20:** *"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.")*.

- (1) One of the Christian's highest goals is to promote the kingdom of God and His standard of righteousness in this sinful world (**Matt. 6:33:** *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."*).
- (2) Our wrath *"does not produce the righteousness of God"*; no good thing for the cause of Christ can come when we give in to and are governed by our anger.
- (3) We can do unimaginable harm to the cause of Christ when we fail to control our anger.

2. **12 How do we overcome anger?** Anger is a strong and dangerous passion, but it can be controlled!

1 Cor. 10:13: *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*

The Bible gives us some specific things we can do to overcome the sinful aspect of anger.

A. **Patience** We must learn to control our anger by exercising patience with people and situations that try us.

Prov. 14:17: *"A quick-tempered man acts foolishly..."*

Prov. 14:29: *"He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly."*

Prov. 15:18: *"A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention."*

- (1) It is sometimes easy to become angry with others, even with our brethren. But notice what Paul tells us: *"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another..."* (Col. 3:12-14)
- (2) The *"elect of God"* are a people that are not characterized by anger, quite the opposite! We are to put on those things that help us overcome anger: mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and a disposition to bear with or put up with our brethren.
- (3) Patience requires practice! Practice! Practice!

B. **13 Forgiveness**

- (1) In Colossians 3:12-14 Paul continues his inspired instruction: **v. 13:** *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*
- (2) Eventually our brethren are going to do more than just make us angry; some will sin against us.
- (3) When that happens we must forgive them as Christ forgives us.
- (4) That requires us to learn to let things go; not nursing grudges and stewing over past offenses that have already been repented of.
- (5) If we don't it will only lead to bitterness, resentment, alienation and depression.

C. **14 Self-Control**

- (1) Aristotle is quoted as saying, "Anyone can become angry. But to become angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy." **
- (2) It takes a tremendous degree of strength to control ourselves once the fires of anger have been stoked by an insult, a slight, or a wrong committed against us. That's why the wise man

said: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” (Prov. 16:32)

- (3) We cannot control the things that happen to us, but we can control how we will respond. The one who controls himself when provoked is stronger than the one who retaliates with anger and wrath.
- (4) **Prov. 29:11:** “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.”
 - (a) When we allow anger to control us, our words and actions will bypass our brain unchecked and unrestrained.
 - (b) We need to pay extra attention to the people, situations, and/or things that are likely to provoke us to anger and make ourselves ready for a proper effort at self-control (e.g., pray for strength). Anticipate the situations that have produced anger in you in the past!

D. **15 A Soft Answer.**

- (1) Part of controlling ourselves in times of anger is simply taking a deep breath and controlling the tone and cadence of our voice. The wise man said: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Prov. 15:1)
“Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.”
—Ambrose Bierce
- (2) It is hard to argue with someone who refuses to shout and argue back.
- (3) When tempers are rising, Christians need to rise above the temptation to fight back and inflame the situation. Instead strive to be calm and give a soft, measured response and it will calm a volatile situation.
- (4) In this regard, never be afraid to be the first one to say, “I’m sorry.” Not, “If I did something to upset you, I’m sorry.” But just say, “I’m sorry.”

E. **16 Discretion.**

- (1) **Prov. 19:11:** “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression.”
- (2) Discretion is the ability to discern or to make a proper judgment before we react to a situation. It enables one to be careful about what he says or what he does. We have to work at developing this characteristic in order to be slow to anger.
- (3) The humorist Will Rogers once said, “People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing.”
 - (a) We can only respond to a situation in the proper manner by taking the time to get all the facts, weigh them carefully and have a good “talk with ourselves” to prevent ourselves from being angry “without a cause” (Matt. 5:22).
 - (b) We can only avoid anger by keeping our wits about us and thinking the matter through instead of responding purely with our emotions.

III. **Conclusion: 17**

- 1. Remember our analogy between anger and fire? Fire can do much good or much harm; it all depends upon our ability to control it.
- 2. The same is true of anger.
 - A. There are times when it is right and proper to be angry and exercising our anger can accomplish much good.
 - B. However, left uncontrolled, anger will always do damage, sometimes unimaginable, irreparable damage.

3. So, let us take anger seriously. If we have a problem with anger we need to pray to God about it, follow what His word says about, and prepare ourselves to deal with it. We can overcome anger!
1 Cor. 10:13: *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*
4. Remember: those who fail to control their anger will not inherit the kingdom of God...they'll be lost!

Adapted from *Overcoming Sin*, by Heath Rogers, 2013, One Stone Press, Bowling Green, KY (pp. 39-43).