

## Applying Scripture to Life

### Topic 9 – Anger

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#### Review/Introduction

We have looked at several truths related to addressing difficult life issues and sin in ourselves and in the lives of those to which we seek to bring care.

1. You must be freed from sin and connected to the source of transformation – Christ (Eph 2:1-10; John 3:16; Rom 1:16-17; 2 Cor 5:17; Rom 6:15-23; Phil 1:6).
2. You must make a decision of the will that your highest purpose is to glorify God. The commitment to glorify God must be your greatest desire, your highest purpose, more important than anything (1 Cor 10:31; Gal 2:20).
3. You must walk in the Spirit as a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; yield your will to God’s moral will as set forth in His word; and allow the word to richly dwell within you (Eph 5:18-6:9; Col 3:16-4:1; Eph 4:29-32; 1 Thess 5:16-21; Gal 5:16-17, 22-23)
4. You must cultivate a deep understanding of God, His character, and His will through a study of His Word.
5. You must be actively involved in a local body (Heb 10:23-25; Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:27; 1 Pet 4:10; Phil 2:3-4).
6. You must cultivate a biblical view of trials and suffering (Rom 8:28-29).
7. You must follow biblical methods of turning from sin – walking in the Spirit, putting off sin, renewing the mind through a vibrant relationship with Christ, and putting on righteousness (Eph 4:20-24).

The world is full of angry people. You only need to watch or listen to the news or open social media to see anger voiced and displayed. But that is anger about societal issues mostly. What about more personal issues? Your husband is inconsiderate. Your wife is nagging. Your parents try to guilt you into action. Your children are rebellious. Your teacher picks on you. Your boss gave you a low performance rating. Your co-workers take advantage of you. The checker at the store takes too long. Californians drive so badly. Your neighbor throws loud parties all the time. Etc. We can be angry about anything.

Today we will look at identifying and putting off anger.

#### Some Definitions

The biblical word for “anger” can refer to the anger of God or the anger of people. When used to refer to God it is normally translated “wrath” in both the NASB and ESV (see Colossians 3:6, 8).

<sup>5</sup>Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. <sup>6</sup>For it is because of these things that the **wrath** of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup>and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup>But now you also, put them all aside: **anger**, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. (Col 3:5-8)

The anger of people is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, hostility, or antagonism. It is a deep seated and a heart attitude.

The anger of God is His settled opposition to and displeasure with sin.

Interestingly, in this passage in Colossians, the same word is used to describe God's opposition to sin that is perfect, holy, and righteous and at the same time something that is evil for people to allow, something that we are to "put off".

"Bitterness" and "wrath" are often connected to "anger".

<sup>31</sup>Let all **bitterness** and **wrath** and **anger** and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph 4:31-32)

"Bitterness" is the "irritable state of mind that keeps a person in perpetual animosity, which inclines them to harsh and uncharitable opinions of people and things, which makes them sour, crabby, repulsive in their general demeanor, which brings a scowl over their face and infuses the words of their tongue with venom."

"Wrath" speaks of passion, an agitated anger, a blaze of sudden anger quickly kindled.

Anger comes from the heart. Just as lust and sexual immorality are connected (Matt 5:27-28). Anger is the internal heart attitude that is connected to murder.

<sup>21</sup>"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that **everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court**; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. (Matt 5:21-22)

Anger is a deed of the flesh in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. <sup>19</sup>Now the **deeds of the flesh are evident**, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, **enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes**, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:16-23)

One thing we can say for sure from Scripture is that **the anger of people is sin**.

❖ **Do you give a justifying euphemism for your anger (i.e., "frustrated")?**

How might anger be manifested? Since anger is a heart attitude, there are multiple manifestations of the it. The most prevalent is the demeanor change with body language and facial expressions. Then there is the physical, verbal, or thought aggression towards people or things. Connected is bitterness, grumbling and complaining (outwardly or inwardly), and keeping a mental log of wrongs done against you. Then there are things like physical or emotional distance from those with whom you are angry and seeking to control them with guilt or passive aggression. There are many manifestations of an angry heart.

So, what are the triggers that temp believers to choose to become angry? Having an elevated view or concern for or importance about your rights, needs, schedule, expectations, desires, reputation, etc. and someone attacks those things, pride swells up and you can become angry at being mistreated (real or imagined) in some way.

### ❖ What are your triggers for anger?

Here are some passages, many from the wisdom literature, which address anger.

<sup>8</sup>Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing. (Psa 37:8)

<sup>1</sup>A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. (Prov 15:1)

<sup>18</sup>A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute. (Prov 15:18)

<sup>24</sup>Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, (Prov 22:24)

<sup>22</sup>An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression. (Prov 29:22)

<sup>8</sup>Scorners set a city aflame, But wise men turn away anger. (Prov 29:8)

<sup>33</sup>For the churning of milk produces butter, And pressing the nose brings forth blood; So the churning of anger produces strife. (Prov 30:33)

<sup>32</sup>He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Prov 16:32)

<sup>29</sup>He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. (Prov 14:29)

<sup>27</sup>He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. (Prov 17:27)

<sup>11</sup>A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression. (Prov 19:11)

<sup>28</sup>*Like* a city that is broken into *and* without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit. (Prov 25:28)

<sup>9</sup>Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools. (Eccl 7:9)

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, **is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered**, (1 Cor 13:4-5)

<sup>20</sup>For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; **that perhaps there will be strife**, jealousy, **angry tempers, disputes**, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; (2 Cor 12:20)

<sup>19</sup>Now the **deeds of the flesh are evident**, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, **outbursts of anger**, disputes, dissensions, factions, (Gal 5:19-20)

<sup>19</sup>*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be **quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger**; <sup>20</sup>for **the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God**. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21)

### **What About Righteous Indignation?**

We have seen clearly that anger is sin. Yet, we also see that God is able to be angry at sin and sinners (His settled opposition and displeasure) and not sin. Some call this “righteous indignation”, but it is really “perfect anger” or “sinless anger”.

The Scriptures are clear that God is slow about His anger, but that He intensely hates all sin.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. (Psalm 103:8)

<sup>13</sup>And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, **For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil**. (Joel 2:13)

<sup>4</sup>For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; **No evil dwells with You**. <sup>5</sup>The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. <sup>6</sup>You destroy those who speak falsehood; The Lord abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. (Psa 5:4-6)

<sup>2</sup>A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; **The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies**. (Nah 1:2)

<sup>6</sup>For it is because of these things that **the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience**, (Col 3:6)

<sup>36</sup>He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him**.” (John 3:36)

#### **❖ Does understanding God’s hatred of sin motivate you toward righteousness?**

Christ was certainly angry at times, but His anger was righteous since He is God and everything He does is right and holy. Also, Jesus is able assess people’s hearts and actions perfectly. There are no triggers that caused Jesus to be angry, His anger was perfectly directed toward sin.

Jesus’ righteous anger over the Jewish leader hypocrisy is stated clearly.

<sup>5</sup>After looking around at them **with anger**, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. (Mark 3:5)

Jesus' clearings of the temple demonstrate His sinless anger.

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*. <sup>15</sup>And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; <sup>16</sup>and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." (John 2:13-17)

<sup>15</sup>Then they \*came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; <sup>16</sup>and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. <sup>17</sup>And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den." (Mark 11:15-17)

So now we say, "Aha! Jesus could be sinlessly angry, and I have an out in Ephesians 4:26-27 that also allows me to be angry!" Well, let's look at that.

<sup>22</sup>that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, <sup>23</sup>and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup>and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. <sup>25</sup>Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup>**Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and do not give the devil an opportunity.** <sup>28</sup>He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. <sup>29</sup>Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup>Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:22-30)

First, we need to understand the context of Ephesians. Paul is writing to believers. He laid out the theological blessings of salvation in chapters 1-3, then implored them to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" in chapters 4-6.

In the progression of thought in chapter 4, Paul commands the Ephesians to "walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." (4:17-19), to put off sin by "laying aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (4:22), to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (4:23), and to "put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (4:24). In 4:25, Paul begins to give examples of put-off/put-on in lying and truth. In 4:28 on, he gives other examples of personal sin to be put-off: stealing, unwholesome words, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander. So, the context surrounding 4:26-27 is putting off personal sin.

The first phrase of Ephesians 4:26 “Be angry and do not sin” is a quote from Psalm 4:4.

<sup>2</sup>O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? *How long* will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? *Selah*. <sup>3</sup>But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself; The Lord hears when I call to Him. <sup>4</sup>**Tremble** (*be angry, ESV*), **and do not sin**; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. *Selah*. <sup>5</sup>Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the Lord. (Psa 4:2-5)

In David’s Psalm 4, the context is the call for God’s people to put off personal sin. This is the same context as Ephesians 4. So, Paul is not quoting Scripture out of context.

In the NASB, the word “yet” is in italics. This means that the NASB *interprets* a need for “yet” but that there is no Greek to back up that English word. “Yet” only confuses the understanding of this verse, giving the impression that it is possible to be angry which is sin and “yet” to not sin. The ESV omits this word since it is not in the Greek.

<sup>26</sup>Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and do not give the devil an opportunity. (Eph 4:26-27 NASB)

<sup>26</sup>Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (Eph 4:26 ESV)

“Be angry” is a command with the usage that directs believers to be continually angry. What then is the object of that continual anger? From the context, the object of the believer’s anger is one’s own sin. “And do not sin” is also a command with the usage that directs believers to be continually not sinning. So, this verse commands believers to be continually angry at their own sin as a means to continually not be sinning. We are to have a deep seated, settled opposition and displeasure toward our own sin.

“Do not let the sun go down on your anger,” is commonly understood to mean that a believer should not go to bed angry calling on them to repent and reconcile relationships before going to sleep at night. But that understanding is read into the passage because of the interpretation of “be angry and do not sin.” However, in context, this means that believer should never stop having a deep seated, settled opposition and displeasure toward their own sin.

#### ❖ **Do you find yourself angry and believe it is justified?**

Verse 27 then is understood to mean that by not having a continual deep seated, settled opposition and displeasure toward your own sin that the believer is giving the devil an opportunity in the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

#### ❖ **Are you continually angry at your own sin and does that drive you to holiness?**

So, is there a righteous indignation? Yes, expressed perfectly by God. There are multiple passages that describe God’s children becoming angry at sin, but description does not mean prescription (e.g., Rahab’s lie). What does “righteous indignation” look like for believers?

First, a complete trust in God’s character including sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, goodness, love, wisdom, etc.

<sup>19</sup>**Never take your own revenge**, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. (Rom 12:19)

And second, a heart that breaks when seeing the sin of God’s people and the lostness of a fallen world which moves you to the only action that can change either, disciple making.

<sup>7</sup>and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, **oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men** <sup>8</sup>(for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds), <sup>9</sup>*then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup>and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires... (2 Pet 2:7-10)

❖ **Do you trust God living in a fallen world? How are you impacted by sin? What does that drive you to do?**

**Putting Off Anger**

So, you find yourself angry, either once or habitually. How do you lay aside this sin?

1. Mediate on your freedom from sin through regeneration by grace through faith in Christ alone. Understand that righteousness is now a choice for the child of God.
2. Determine that glorifying God is your highest priority. Make a commitment of your will to do whatever it takes to glorify God.
3. Walk in the Spirit, allowing the words of Christ to dwell richly in you.
4. Labor to renew your mind through a dynamic, intimate relationship with God through the intake of the word and prayer.
5. Make a commitment of the will to repent from anger throwing it away from you like a sewage-soaked garment (Eph 4:20-24). This will include not only repenting of anger but the underlying issue as well (e.g., pride and selfishness). This will also include the movement to heal relationships broken by your anger.
6. Make a commitment to put on righteousness. As your mind is renewed, put on the opposite of anger.

Some think that the opposite of anger is “self-control”. Remember that anger is not what comes out of you, it is in the heart. Keeping anger inside and not letting it out through self-control is not dealing with the sin. Here are the “putt-ons”. We will particularly talk about forgiveness in a future lesson.

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Put-off</b>	<b>Put-on</b>
Eph 4:31-32	<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and <b>anger</b> and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.	<sup>32</sup> <b>Be kind</b> to one another, <b>tender-hearted, forgiving</b> each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
Col 3:8-15	<sup>8</sup> But now you also, put them all aside: <b>anger</b> , wrath, malice, slander, <i>and</i> abusive speech from your mouth.	put on a heart of <b>compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness</b> and <b>patience</b> ; <sup>13</sup> <b>bearing with one another</b> , and <b>forgiving</b> each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup> Beyond all these things <b>put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.</b>

7. As often as you sin, repeat this cycle.
8. Praise God for His work to save and sanctify you.

## **Apply it**

*Yourself:* You are married, and your marriage is good most of the time. Occasionally, when you get into arguments with your spouse, you use anger to control your spouse because you know he/she fears it. This usually brings the argument to an end, but it is followed by days of silence. Life resumes as usual after several days.

1. What first action would best glorify God?
2. Once you realize you've sinned in this way, what should you do instead of waiting for things to resume as usual?
3. What process will you follow to deal with this anger?

*Someone Else:* A church-going teenager is angry much of the time. (He/She) finds himself thinking angry thoughts most of the day. He is angry at his parents because they sin against him and each other. He is also angry at others at school: some because of their arrogance, others because they do wrong or stupid things, and others because they are fake. He has few friends. He complains frequently. This teenager's parent has asked you for help.

1. What is the most important thing for you to know in this situation?
2. After that, where would you begin as you seek to bring Biblical care?
3. What are some important truths that must be explained to this person?

## **Conclusion**

The Bible declares that anger is a heart-level sin. There is hope because God through the Spirit and Word can bring about sanctification, change into Christlikeness.



## Additional Study

1. Think about what the Bible says about anger and what the world says about anger. Have you adopted the worlds way of thinking?
2. Think about the times when you chose to be angry. Pray for God to show you your underlying sin (e.g., pride, selfishness, etc.)
3. Work through the put-on/put-off process for the anger and the underlying sin also?
4. What does you being angry say about what you believe about God's character?