

Anger Ephesians 4: 26

Intro

Envy – green

Anger – red. Anger is hot – it simmers, boils sparks, smokes, smoulders, explodes, blazes, scorches and devours.

Road rage in Chesterton

Anger may start early with the temper tantrums of small children but its flames lick high and far into history's worst ethnic and international conflicts.

Anger has been called the worst saboteur of the mind and the leading cause of misery, depression, sickness, and industrial accidents.

WHAT IS ANGER?

Definition: What we feel when something that hurts or upsets us. More precisely a strong emotion in response to a real or perceived wrongdoing.

It comes about when you think that something unjust or unfair has been done to someone else or more likely you yourself. That you have been thwarted in something you wanted and felt should have been the way you wanted it..

It is an emotional response. We feel angry: our blood pressure mounts; our adrenalin flows, our emotion prepare out body to react – either in flight or fight. The physical state can be over quickly or it can last for hours or even days

But anger can become more than just an spontaneous reaction. Anger can transform into a negative emotional state which is willed and controlled. We make a deliberate choice to go on being angry at something or someone.

Complicated in Bible because God gets angry – hundreds of refs! Show list – nine pages. 95% of them are to the anger of God.

Bible never criticizes God's anger God is wise, sovereign, powerful, perfect and all-knowing so he never misinterprets a situation, never loses control. He is always angered by sin and injustice and he always responds appropriately.

but the Bible warns against sinful human anger repeatedly.

Eg.Ephesians 4: 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice.

To understand why Bible is so concerned about anger we need to look at the effects of sinful anger:

I. THE EFFECTS OF SINFUL ANGER

Anger opens the door to Satan Ephesians 4: 27.

Foothold – image. Car body work – perfectly smooth or risk corrosion.

When we nurse anger it gives the devil the opening he is looking for. When we do nothing to prevent outbursts of anger it is like saying Satan, come in and be my guest. And he will and he will create havoc with your life and in all around you.

Anger leads to all sorts of other sins. Prov 29:22

(NIV) An angry man stirs up dissension,
and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

Typically – leads to taking revenge – or to bottling up which turns people sour and bitter and resentful.

Either way it is just the opening in our spiritual armour that Satan is always looking for.

Anger prevents spiritual growth James 1:20

The righteous activity that meets God's approval.

Effect on others. Quote from Barclay.

Equally it can be prevent spiritual growth for you. Either outbursts of anger or a repressed, silent, passive aggressive anger.

It brings judgement Matthew 5: 22

Jesus said 'I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. Anyone who says 'You fool' will be in danger of hellfire.'

In Galatians 5: 19 Paul lists fits of rage as one of the acts of the sinful nature that keep people out of the kingdom of God.

The effects of sinful anger are serious.

How do we deal with it?

II. DEALING WITH ANGER

Discern when your anger is sinful Ephesians 4: 26

Guinness:

The motive is wrong

Unless it is motivated by love it will be sinful. As soon as anger becomes is an attempt to claw back some respect for my ego then it ceases to be righteous.

Self-control is lost

Righteous anger is always controlled. As soon as control is gone you can be sure your anger is sinful or that there is a sinful element present..

The expression of the anger is excessive

Righteous anger doesn't exaggerate the wrong. If you find yourself inflating the offence and minimising any possible excuses, then you are in trouble.

There are plans for revenge

We ruminate about how to hurt the offender to get back at them.

'Not a sin to be angry but it is hard not to sin when we are angry.'

In general – be careful!!

So what can we do about anger?

Perhaps more than most of the deadly sins anger is one we feel we can't do anything about.

The Bible wouldn't agree. The Bible insists that we can.

Ephesians 4: 31 'Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger.' It wouldn't say that if God didn't think it was possible.

Self-control is one of the fruit of the Spirit – he is the spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

So what do we do?

Two areas – first some practical advice from Scripture, second more theological imperative on anger.

1. CONTROLLING ANGER: BIBLICAL WISDOM EPHESIANS 4:31.

Learn to stop yourself James 1: 19

There is a moment before anger kicks in when we have a choice. Learn to move instantly in on that moment and to listen and not to speak.

For some of us this is difficult. There are long term habits that need re-learning but the bible insists that they can be relearned.

Sometimes people need help from a book or even a counselor. But the Bible insists it is possible.

Think it through Psalm 4: 4

In your anger do not sin:

When you are on your beds,

Search you hearts and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord.

'Search your hearts' = 'ponder in your own hearts' in other words: 'think it through'

Why am I reacting like this? Is it justified? More below.

Express it appropriately

Proverbs 29:11 a fool gives full vent to his anger but a wise man keeps himself under control.

Idea that it is good to act out anger by yelling, smashing golf clubs on pillows etc is completely discredited. Research has shown that that tends to make things worse not better.

Ventilating anger: outbursts of rage typically pump up the emotional brain's arousal leaving people feeling more angry not less.

However, there is a danger of not admitting anger or of simply locking it away inside. There is a time to be silent but it is rarely right to be silent indefinitely.

Better than explosion or repression is proper expression and even confession. A controlled articulation of the fact that we are angry. Not shouting and smashing dishes. But a calm statement – even just to yourself: 'I feel angry about xyz'. Or to a friend. Sometimes eventually even to the person causing it.

Best of all to God.

We see this modelled in the Psalms where there is a controlled expression of anger, as a prayer to God, a mixture of confession and pleading.

Learn to express it appropriately.

Set strict time limits Ephesians 4:26.

Sunset regarded as time limit for all sorts of things. For example paying wages to a poor man.

Paul gives a warning against brooding in anger. Christians are not to nurse anger like a baby crocodile, feeding it and caring for it until it grows into a monster.

I was in a meeting once where some hurtful and unfair things were said to one of the people present. I did my best to stand up for the person but it couldn't compensate for what should never have been said.

We spoke on the 'phone the next morning. I expressed my annoyance. And said how sorry I had been for him. 'I was angry' he said, ' But I didn't let the sun go down on my wrath.'

He had taken this to heart and I am sure that his spiritual life was the better for it.

How many ulcers and depressions and inner misery would be nipped in the bud if we just set time limits.

2. CONTROLLING ANGER: THEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES

Trust revenge to God Romans 12 19 – 21

Revenge is one of the ways that anger tries to redress the wrong it feels has been done.

'Don't get mad, get even.'

We feel no one else is going to revenge our wrong so we do it ourselves. Vigilante movies – Bronson – Death Wish.

Examples from Times article

God is the one who takes revenge and he has appointed civic authorities and agents (Romans 13: 4) who can do it dispassionately with more chance of it being fair.

It is not your job!

If there is a real wrong – let God sort it out. You can be sure he will. If it is a legal matter – leave it up to the right authorities. Don't do it yourself. Don't take revenge through that sly word which would destroy someone else's reputation. Leave it to God. The desire for revenge is natural enough but we no longer need to react that way. Now we know that we that God is one our side. As we grow more secure in the love of God and convinced of the total control of God, we learn to control our anger.

Smash the idol of your rights Phil. 2:3 – 5

Ask yourself: Why is it I am so angry? Why is it I am so *angry*? Why is it I am *so* angry?

In 99/100 sinful anger is because we think we have some right or entitlement that has been thwarted. Things are not the way they should be and it makes us mad.

We have erected an idol of our rights, our entitlements, how things ought to be. It may be right – it may not be. But we have made it into an idol. And we care about our idols so when our idol doesn't get what we think it should have we are angry.

Identifying these little idols.

Then smash them: Follow Jesus in refusing to stand on your rights: 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

The idol of getting our own way, the idol of my rights, the idol of my way of doing things, the idol of what I am entitled to = all have to be smashed as idols or we will never get stop being angry

Replace anger with love 1 Cor. 13: 4-5, Matt 6: 43 – 47.

As we have seen so often in this series, the answer to anger is not merely self-control. It is not like weeding a garden and then leaving the garden untended. It is like weeding the garden and then planting it with flowers and fruit and vegetables. Plants which are beautiful and tasty and luscious.

First and foremost the opposite of anger is love: 1 Cor 13: 4-5, love is not easily angered.

Once again it is as we grow in love that we will get rid of anger our lives.

How does this show itself – Jesus tells us – Matthew 5: 43 – 48.

Lincoln and Stanton story.

If Lincoln had nurtured anger towards Stanton both would have gone to their graves as bitter enemies. By the power of love Lincoln transformed an enemy into a friend.

MLK 'Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force, so beautifully exemplified in the life of Christ, is the most potent instrument available in mankind's quest for peace and security. Napoleon Bonaparte, the French military genius, looking back over his years of conquest is reported to have said:

Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have built great empires. But upon what did they depend?

They depended on force. But centuries ago Jesus started an empire that was built on love and even to this day millions will die for him.

Who can doubt the veracity of these words. The great military leaders of the past have gone and their empires have crumbled and burned to ashes. But the empire of Jesus built solidly and majestically on the foundation of love is still growing...

The question is are we part of it?