

Anger And Its Management

I. Definitions.

- A. anger: The active feeling provoked against the agent; passion, rage; wrath, ire, hot displeasure.
- B. angry: Of persons: actively affected against the agent or cause of trouble; feeling or showing resentment; enraged, wrathful, irate.
- C. rage: Madness; insanity; a fit or access of mania. *Obs. exc. poet.* 2. Violent anger, furious passion, usually as manifested in looks, words or action; a fit or access of such anger; angry disposition.
- D. wrath: Vehement or violent anger; intense exasperation or resentment; deep indignation.
- E. fury: Fierce passion, disorder or tumult of mind approaching madness; esp. wild anger, frenzied rage; also, a fit or access of such passion.
- F. fierce: Of formidably violent and intractable temper, like a wild beast; vehement and merciless in anger or hostility.

II. There is a time and place for anger.

- A. God Himself expresses anger. **DEU 9:7-8; PSA 7:11; 2:4-5; 78:38.**
- B. Christ expresses anger. **MAR 3:5; REV 6:16.**
- C. We may be angry within limitations. It is a useful power. **PRO 25:23.**
 - 1. Anger should be governed. **EPH 4:26; PSA 37:8.**
 - 2. Anger against others without cause is wrong. **MAT 5:22.**
 - 3. Anger which drives one to defy God is wrong. **PSA 106:30-33.**
 - 4. Anger over minor injuries may invite Christ's rebuke. **LUK 9:51-56.**
 - 5. Inappropriate anger is to be put away from us in view of a higher calling. **EPH 4:31-32.**

III. That there is a time and a place for anger does not imply that it should be the defining part of our character, the default reaction to whatever displeases us.

- A. There is a time and place for many other uncomfortable or negative words and actions, such as rebuke (**LEV 19:17**), mockery (**1KI 18:27**), judgment (**ISA 59:14-15**), etc.
 - 1. Yet it would be wrong to rebuke the righteous, mock the handicapped, or forget that mercy rejoices against judgment where possible. **JAM 2:13.**
 - 2. That God Himself may rebuke, mock or judge and even condone or expect us to do so in season is not a justification for not governing our exercise of such traits.
 - 3. NOTE: It is a tendency of our nature to seek divine authority for our weaknesses and errors to justify ourselves rather than justify God Who teaches us to exercise not only negative impulses in season but also discernment, restraint, moderation, temperance, etc.
 - 4. Be wary of an untempered spirit masquerading as righteous zeal for the Lord. **2KI 10:16, 29-31; LUK 9:51-56.**
- B. We are warned about angry men, men who are basically defined by wrath. **PRO 15:18; 21:24; 29:22; 22:24-25; 21:19.**
 - 1. (**PRO 12:16**) A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.
 - 2. Like it or not, we will have a reputation in this world: we will be known by our fruits. **MAT 7:20; PRO 20:11; LUK 6:45.**
 - 3. "When people show you who they are, believe them." (Maya Angelou)
 - 4. When we show ourselves *friendly* rather than *fretful*, our chances of maintaining positive companionship improve. **PRO 18:24.**

- IV. Jesus Christ is the perfect man, the ultimate model of a well-governed, self-governed, devoted servant of God. **EPH 4:13.**
- A. Yes, He demonstrated anger *sometimes*.
 - 1. He overturned tables in the temple *twice*, meditatively, not rashly. **JOH 2:13-15.**
 - 2. He was angry at hard-hearted hypocrites who draped their corruption in piety. **MAR 3:5-6.**
 - 3. He *once* cursed a fig tree. **MAR 11:21.**
 - B. But He was widely known for doing good, suffering long with His wayward children, having compassion on the ignorant, meek and gentle. Wrath was certainly not His default response to everything contrary to His way of thinking. **2CO 10:1; 1TI 1:16; HEB 5:1-2.**
 - C. Sinners regularly tried to provoke Him to speak unadvisedly with His lips (as Moses did) but He never yielded to their temptations. **LUK 11:53-54.**
 - D. He Whose Spirit inspired Paul's writings was "...not easily provoked..." (**1CO 13:5**).
 - E. If ever there was a man who had cause to be angry with God and sinners, it was Jesus. Nobody ever suffered injustice as He did.
 - 1. His reward for utter faithfulness was an unjust death and abandonment by the Father. **MAT 27:46.**
 - 2. He was threatened and reviled by sinners but never responded in kind, leaving us an example of suffering patiently. **1PE 2:20-25.**
 - F. It is true that Satan *had nothing in Him* (**JOH 14:30**) but the same could be said about Adam before he yielded to temptation. Adam yielded. Christ didn't.
 - 1. Christ has given us His Spirit to indwell us, and He is greater than our flesh and this world. **1JO 4:4.**
 - 2. Christ has given us the word of His Spirit to convict us, correct us, guide us, improve us, revive us, refresh us and comfort us so that we by faith may have the greatest victory over this world and all the frustrations it represents to us. **1JO 5:4.**
 - 3. There are basically four deceptions to avoid in overcoming character flaws:
 - a. Victory is impossible.
 - b. Victory is unnecessary.
 - c. Victory is damaging to my self-image.
 - d. Victory that is only incremental is no victory.
 - 4. Much of our success as believers is owing to a reasonable assessment of this fallen world, our own flaws, and the fact that we are not God Whose will is absolute.
- V. "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment..." (**MAT 5:22**). This issue alone deserves attention.
- A. The Jews stressed the judgment of outward actions only, such as unlawful killing (v. 21) which was to be adjudicated and punished by sentence of death in wilful cases. **NUM 35:31.**
 - 1. They knew the Law differentiated between premeditated or active killing and one who killed another but "...hated him not in time past" (**DEU 19:6**). **NUM 35:22-23.**
 - 2. They recognized that inward malice was the fountain of murder but held that as long as the inward malice was not acted upon (either by self-restraint or by frustration of intention), there was no sin involved. ct/w **1JO 3:15.**
 - 3. Christ here warns against judgment for unjustified anger.
 - a. God judges the heart, not only the actions (**PSA 7:9; HEB 4:12**), therefore the man who has unjustified anger against someone in his heart is judged a sinner by God regardless of whether or not he acts upon his anger.

- b. God judges unjustified anger that has offended a brother as rendering religious service unacceptable unless repentance unto reconciliation is done. **MAT 5:23-24.**
 - c. Unjustified anger that lands one in the courts may also put one in danger of the civil judgment (**MAT 5:25-26**) so it is best to make amends beforehand.
 - (1) Your cause may not look as rosy to impartial witnesses at law as it does to you. Trials have a way of cooling foolish heads of steam.
 - (2) Consider Paul's warning against brethren pushing things to law that should have been dropped or dealt with privately or by the church. **1CO 6:1-8.**
 - d. We have much to do in governing both our hands and our hearts (the seat of passion). Exercise discretion. **PRO 19:11.**
- B. We should avoid jumping to conclusions about others on the basis of limited, biased or spurious information. Much foolish anger is generated by such. **ACT 19:28-29.**
 - 1. We are to avoid *evil surmisings* (the framing of conjectures; suspicion, esp. of evil). **1TI 6:4.**
 - 2. The other side deserves a voice, a chance to explain. **JOH 7:51; JOS 22:10-34.**
 - 3. Circulating unfounded speculations that darken someone's character is *slander*; a sin before God (**PRO 10:18; PSA 101:5**) and an invitation to civil action.
- C. Suffice it to say that unjustified anger against another corrupts one's heart, logic, speech and relationships. Those problems of themselves are judgments that should be avoided.

VI. Anger and its management is much about control and this is summarized by:

- A. control of others: everyone should do what I want.
- B. control by others: a perceived victimhood, an unappreciated pawn that must retaliate.
- C. control of circumstances: frustration over things eluding one's control.
- D. control of God: frustration that God doesn't do things as you would like.
- E. control of self: lack of temperance (rational self-restraint), unreasonable expectations.

VII. Success in this "control warfare" begins with improving control of self.

- A. We know that charity is the chief virtue. **1CO 13:13.**
 - 1. It "...is not easily provoked..." (**1CO 13:5**).
 - 2. Preceding this are other aspects of charity like "...envieth not...vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...seeketh not her own..." (**vs. 4-5**). These are pride issues, and they breed contention. **PRO 13:10.**
 - 3. pride: A high or overweening opinion of one's own qualities, attainments, or estate, which gives rise to a feeling and attitude of superiority over and contempt for others; inordinate self-esteem.
 - 4. We are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. **ROM 12:3.**
 - 5. "Hot spirits are usually high spirits. Only by pride comes contention both with God and man." (Matthew Henry)
- B. We are not to be *soon angry*. **PRO 14:17; 29; ECC 7:8-9; JAM 1:19-20.**
 - 1. God is *slow to anger*. **NEH 9:17.**
 - 2. Better to de-escalate a provocation than throw fuel on fire. **PRO 15:1, 18; ROM 12:21.**
 - 3. Often, someone who says or does something to provoke another is really hoping that an angry response will be produced.
 - 4. Also, if we would be honest, a short fuse of a temper is often our lazy choice of dealing with something or someone that perturbs us. It's easier to explode than

- analyze and correct.
5. Look inwardly before taking umbrage at someone's uncharitable words.
ECC 7:21-22.
- C. Gaining control over our own spirit is superior to controlling everyone and everything else.
PRO 16:32.
1. Having no control over our own spirit opens us up to attack. **PRO 25:28.**
 2. He who enrages you controls you, and wicked men use this power to advance strife and their own agendas.
- D. It is observable that those who have no control over themselves will tend to demand control over others.
1. Nebuchadnezzar was a self-worshipping tyrant who demanded absolute conformity to his will. **DAN 3:5; 5:18-19.**
 2. He was also a man of great fury. **DAN 3:13, 19.**
 3. NOTE: we don't gain control by losing control!
 4. Also, those who gain control of their own spirits are more likely to be reasonable people that others will respect and be more willing to hearken to. Thus, ironically, the self-controlled, reasonable person actually does achieve a positive control of others and of circumstances.
 5. We love and obey Jesus Christ not only because we must do so since He is our Sovereign God and Judge, but also because we know He is compassionate, reasonable and has our best interests at heart. Remember Napoleon Bonaparte's observation about Jesus Christ: He has a greater power by love than emperors have by force.