

Anger

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Anger is an emotion experienced by all people throughout the world to greater or lesser degrees. The key to managing it is the ability to examine where the anger stems from and what we decide to do with the emotion. Anger can even be constructive if it motivates an individual to make necessary changes in their lives.

Anger is a secondary emotion that often arises due to an unmet expectation. We can see an example of this in Balak's reaction when events didn't work out the way he wanted them to, based on his own agenda or reasoning,

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a desolate height. ⁴ And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on *each* altar a bull and a ram." ⁵ Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." ⁶ So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. ⁷ And he took up his oracle and said: "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!' ⁸ "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce [whom] the LORD has not denounced? ⁹ For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations. ¹⁰ "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!" ¹¹ Then Balak said to Balaam, "**What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed *them* bountifully!**" ... ¹³ Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there." ... ²⁷ **Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there"** (Num. 23:3-11, 13, 27; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; *emphasis added*).

Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed *them* these three times! (Num. 24:10; cf. De. 29:19-20; *emphasis added*).

In general, controlling one's anger can be very difficult but learning to do so will greatly increase strength of character and peace of spirit,

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city (Pro. 16:32; Pro. 15:1, 18; 19:11; Ecc. 7:9).

Controlling anger also requires being proactive each day to address the affects it has on those we interact with. It is vitally important for healthy relationships to promptly deal with anger and not let it fester or take root within us (Hbr. 12:15). If this occurs, it distances individuals and provides an opportunity for the Adversary to use those emotions to divide us,

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, "for we are members of one another. ²⁶ "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil (Eph. 4:25-27).

And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand ²⁶ "and if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end (Mar. 3:25-26).

Although we as physical beings battle with anger, the emotion is not limited to those of the physical realm. We can see anger being expressed by Christ throughout the Bible (Who did the early church think Jesus Christ was prior to his birth as a man?), when God's people know what they should be doing to fulfill His instructions but refuse to obey. In the following scriptures, Christ expresses his anger due to Israel's ingratitude and lack of faith,

Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue." ¹¹ So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the LORD? ¹² "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." ¹³ But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever *else* You may send." ¹⁴ So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. (Ex. 4:10-14).

For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them. ¹⁰ "So the LORD's anger was aroused on that day, and He swore an oath, saying, ¹¹ 'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, ¹² 'except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD. ¹³ "So the LORD's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone. ¹⁴ "And look! You have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel (Num. 32:9-14).

Stubbornness,

And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. ²⁰ Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, ²¹ "I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died (Jdg. 2:19-21).

Ungratefulness,

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. ² Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. ³ So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them. ⁴ Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? ⁵ "We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ "but now our whole being *is* dried up; *there is* nothing at all except this

manna *before* our eyes!" ⁷ Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. ⁸ The people went about and gathered *it*, ground *it* on millstones or beat *it* in the mortar, cooked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. ⁹ And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it. ¹⁰ Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased (Num. 11:1-10; Psa. 78:17-19, 25-32).

Disrespect or self-righteousness,

So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard *it*. ³ (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) ⁴ Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. ⁵ Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. ⁶ Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, *I*, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. ⁷ Not so with My servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all My house. ⁸ I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" ⁹ So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed (Num. 12:2-9).

Idolatry or harlotry,

Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ² They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel (Num. 25:1-3; De. 4:25-26; 6:13-15; 7:4; 13:17; 32:16, 21; 1Ki. 14:9; 21:22; 22:53; 2Ki 17:11-17; 21:6-15; 22:17; 2Ch 28:25; 2Ch 33:6; 34:25; Psa 106:29; Jer. 7:20; Jer 25:6; Jer 25:7; Jer 32:30; Jer 44:3; Jer 51:44-48).

Disobedience and sin,

And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they *are* blessed." ¹³ So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you." ¹⁴ And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." ¹⁵ Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. ¹⁶ And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; ¹⁷ for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me.' " ¹⁸ Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. ¹⁹ "Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me." ²⁰ And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "**If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you--that you shall do.**" ²¹ So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and **went with the princes of Moab.** ²² Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him (Num. 22:12-22; cf. Psa. 106:6-40; 2Sa 6:6-7; 1Ch 13:10; Neh. 9:17; Isa. 1:4; Jer 21:5; Lam 1:12-22; Lam 3:42-43; Eze 5:15; Eze 7:3-8; Eze 16:26; Eze 20:21; Eze 22:20; Dan 9:16; *emphasis added*).

There are also instances throughout the Bible in which righteous anger is stirred in the lives of individuals serving God, due to the stubborn pride and sinful behaviors of others around them (Ex. 11:8; Mt. 21:12; Mk. 11:15; Jn. 2:15; Hos. 13:11). One such case is found in Moses' reaction to Israel's idolatry,

So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf [and] the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ...²² So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they [are set] on evil (Ex. 32:19, 22).

Yet, Moses also demonstrated anger based on his personal frustrations and disregard to God's instruction,

"Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. **Speak to the rock** before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals."...¹¹ Then Moses lifted his hand and **struck the rock twice with his rod**; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.¹² Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:8, 11-12; Psa. 78:20-22; *emphasis added*).

Christ demonstrated righteous anger in his time as a man when responding to the unlawful use of the temple (Why Did Christ Overturn the Tables of the Moneychangers?),

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.¹³ And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves' " (Mt. 21:12-13; cf. Mk. 11:15; Jn. 2:15).

Even though Christ's anger has been stirred by disobedience and sinful behavior (2Ki. 21:14; Isa. 19:25; 47:6; Jer. 16:18), there have been many times when he turned from his anger with great patience and love,

But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed your commandments.¹⁷ They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of your wonders that you did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But you *are* god, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them (Neh. 9:16-17; Psa. 78:38; 85:3; Isa. 12:1).

Another source of anger is jealousy. This can be expressed as Godly jealousy, which is stirred up because individuals choose to serve under the Adversary and his system instead of God's,

You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth;⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth [generations] of those who hate Me,⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments (Ex. 20:4-6; 34:14; De. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Jos. 24:19; Nah. 1:2).

However, jealousy may also lead to harboring a spirit of murder. An example of this can occur between siblings, as the example of Cain and Abel illustrates,

Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,⁵ but 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?"⁷ "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."⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him (Gen. 4:4-8; cf. Dan. 3:13-22).

Jacob and Esau,

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."⁴² And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you [by intending] to kill you."⁴³ "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran."⁴⁴ "And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away,"⁴⁵ "until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" (Gen. 27:41-45; cf. Gen. 49:5-7; 1Sa 17:28; 1Sa 20:30, 34)

Absalom, Amnon and Tamar,

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone!" ...²² And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar (2Sa. 13:15, 22).

Jealousy and anger can also arise between spouses,

And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Gen. 30:2; cf. Jdg. 14:19; Num. 5:14, 30).

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ (2Cr. 11:2).

However, not all anger related to loved ones is unlawful. Anger due to the murder of a family member is natural and allowance for it is found in the law. However if the family member was killed without premeditation, or due to an accident, the offending individual should not be put to death and as a result is provided a place of safety and refuge,

You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.⁴ "And this [is] the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past--⁵ "as when a *man* goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies--he shall flee to one of these cities and live;⁶ "lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past (De. 19:3-6).

Anger not only affects others, but also blinds us from seeing our own errors and faults,

So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ⁶ And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. ⁷ And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; ⁸ And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if [that had been] too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. ⁹ Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife [to be] thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon (2Sa. 12:5-9).

And can lead to elevated stress and other adverse affects upon our health.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret--*it* only *causes* harm (Psa. 37:8).

There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor *any* health in my bones because of my sin (Ps. 38:3).

Anger, bitterness, malice, disputes, and speaking badly of others also affects our spiritual health, and grieves God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Eph. 4:30-32). If we cannot practice self-restraint when it comes to our temper, we will ultimately distance ourselves from God (Col. 3:5-11).

There is no escape from the consequences of knowingly violating God's law, consequently stirring His anger because He knows we will harm ourselves and others as a consequence (Pro. 20:2; Jon. 3:9; Psa. 56:7; 78:50, 58; 69:24). Scripture shows that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God (Heb. 10:31) and all the more in the heat of His anger (Ps. 6:1; Ps. 90:7-11).

If we chose to violate His law, God is not obligated to protect us,

Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God *is* not among us?' ¹⁸ "And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. ... ²⁹ "For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands" (De. 31:17-18, 29; Jdg. 3:8; 10:7; 1Ki. 14:15; 2Ki. 13:3; Psa. 27:9)

Blessings,

Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, ¹⁷ "lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you (De. 11:16-17; 29:19-28).

Inheritance,

O My mountain in the field, I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, *and* your high places of sin within all your borders. ⁴ And you, even yourself, shall let go of your heritage which I

gave you; and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in my anger *which* shall burn forever." ⁵ Thus says the Lord: "cursed *is* the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord (Jer 17:3-5; 15:14).

And without intervention (including repentance and forgiveness), these choices will ultimately lead to destruction,

And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. ¹⁹ "For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also (De. 9:18-19;).

Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. ⁹ By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His anger they are consumed (Job 4:8-9).

For a fire is kindled in my anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; it shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains (De. 32:22; cf. Job 9:5; Jer. 10:24; Mic 5:15; Nah 1:3-6; Hab 3:8-12; Zep 3:8; Zec 10:3).

Unlike what is commonly assumed, consequences for disobedience are not always immediate (Ps. 78:38; 103:8; 145:8, cf. Ecc. 5:6; Jl. 2:13). The lessons that come as a result of lawbreaking may not be fully realized in an individual's lifetime. Nevertheless, sooner or later there are always consequences for actions we take.

The effects of anger can be seen in the lives of individuals, between cultural groups, and nationalities. We can see through the fruits of the world around us that the carnal mind continues to rebel against God in the decisions being made (2Ki. 19:20-28; Psa. 2:1-4; 7:6; Isa. 37:28; Ac. 4:24; Rom. 8:7-8). The world seems only to be increasing in the demand to consume, pursue and retain wealth at all costs, which is leading to greater violence, danger, worry, sorrow, sickness and anger (Ecc. 5:6-17).

Yet with humility, a repentant attitude, and change in actions, our sins can be forgiven (Zep. 2:2-3; Jer. 4:8). We must remember that although God may express anger for a short time (Ps. 85:3-5), it comes from love and mercy. He knows that living contrary to His law is harmful to ourselves and those around us (Hos. 14:4; Mic. 7:18). Upon repentance, God provides comfort and greater happiness (Isa. 12:1; Ps. 30:5). This is much like the concept of disciplining a child in order to provide them with proper guidance and values that will last throughout their life (Pro. 22:6, 15; 23:13; 29:15, cf. Ps. 32:8, Isa. 48:17).

In summary, anger can be either constructive or destructive depending on how it's handled. We must do what we can in our individual lives to live in and pursue peace through obedience to God (Ps. 34:14; 1Pe. 3:11). If this world chooses to act in ways contrary to God's law with an unrepentant spirit, Christ will return with great wrath and fury to humble the proud (Job 40:11), render judgment and restore peace to all creation (Isa. 66:15).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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