

Wrath of Man



"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath because the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:19).

Anger is a powerful force and we live in a world full of angry people. Sadly enough, it's not just nonbelievers who act out in anger or vent their rage. Anger is an epidemic problem that is ruining families, tearing churches apart, hurting children, and bringing division in the body of Christ.

Anger makes people lash out at others, destroying relationships and revealing man's true nature. Anger is selfish, undisciplined, and vindictive. Uncontrolled anger is a devastating sin, and no one is exempt from its havoc. Christian maturity involves a lot of things, and it includes knowing how to deal with your anger.

Proverbs 30:33 says, "anger can cause division" and the division stems from anger that is acted upon. How many relationships do you know that have ended because of someone's fit of anger?

The enemy often raises issues that will divide believers (Ephesians 6:12). Many times you will find the resulting division comes through acts of anger. Unfortunately, many individuals will blame the devil for people's actions. Friends, you can't blame everything on the devil when someone acts out in anger. When this happens, the individual is actually agreeing with the enemy's attempt to cause division and anger is the conduit used.

The Bible is clear that our actions/words are controlled by us and our thoughts (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 15:18). This means we have a choice to act upon them. There are many passages that refer to "self control" as an essential characteristic for Christians and that command us to exhibit self control. Fools give in to vent their anger, but wise persons keep themselves under control.

We are responsible to control our tempers and not mistreat others (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; 2 Peter 1:5-8; Galatians 5:22,23; 2 Tim. 1:7; Psalm 37:8; Prov. 14:29). Anger causes mistreatment of others, not the devil! Furthermore, "An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins" (Proverbs 29:22). Not refraining from anger and turning towards wrath leads only to evil" (Psalm 37:8).

Never underestimate anger's destructive power. I once worked for a person who yelled, accused people of doing things they hadn't done, belittled people in front of others, and often treated others disrespectfully because of uncontrolled anger issues. I have to be honest. It was really difficult not to respond back, but I purposed in my heart not to act the same way regardless of how this person behaved. Through it all, I kept thinking about James 1:19, ("Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath because the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God").

Needless to say, I got a birds-eye view of how this person's behavior was not producing the righteousness of God. As time progressed, this person continued to express anger, hostility and wrath toward others which created a hostile work environment, forcing many to quit (myself included). To be honest, we felt bullied and extremely beat up.

Can anger be overcome instead of one being constantly overcome by it? Yes—with God's help. So where do we start? Stop making excuses for the anger or bad temper. Denying angry emotions is not good or helpful. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Never take your own revenge. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good and never let the sun go down on our anger.

We must purpose in our heart to be slow to anger because the anger which quickly rises will not accomplish God's righteousness in our lives. We must remember always that the Son of God came into the world to destroy the works of anger (my emphasis on works of the enemy!). We are what we experience in life and our reactions to experiences can produce positive or negative effects in our spiritual walk. It's always our choice in which way we walk.

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32).

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