

Anger Approved

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Anger Approved (Eph. 4:26).

Anger Disapproved (Eccl. 7:9; Prov. 22:24; Jas. 1:20).

When reconciling apparent contradictions in scripture, it is important to carefully examine the context. In Ephesians 4:26-27, the context is dealing with four issues. The first is anger and the second is sin (cf. 1Jn. 3:4), while the third is a caution to deal quickly with our feelings of anger. Finally, the consequence of unresolved anger is explained,

'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place (opportunity) to the devil (Eph. 4:26-27; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Although God gets angry when anyone commits sin, He does so because that individual will suffer a negative consequence at some point. It is no different when a loving parent is angry at their child for doing something foolish that could have seriously harmed them.

Because God loves everyone he has created, His love is expressed in various emotions including anger. If He never got angry at sinful behavior and its consequences on those who commit sin, He would be like a psychopath,

A psychopath may say something like 'I love you,' but in reality, it means about as much to him as if he said 'I'll have a cup of coffee.' This is one of the reasons why psychopaths remain so cool, calm, and collected under conditions of extreme danger... (The Wisdom of Psychopaths; pg. 6; author Kevin Dutton; publisher - Scientific America/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, First edition 2012).

In contrast to a psychopath anyone, who believes that God's word should be obeyed and sees someone committing a sinful act, should feel a certain amount of anger knowing that rebelling against God eventually leads to serious problems including death (Rom. 6:23). Christ expressed this kind of anger when he was dealing with the Pharisees,

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you go about the sea and the dried out places to make one proselyte, and when it happens, you make him a son of Gehenna (Gr. 1067, [freq. translated, hell] an area outside Jerusalem's walls where a perpetual fire burned trash, dead criminals and dead animals that were cast out of the city) twofold more than you (Mt. 23:15; RNT; cf. Jn. 2:14-15; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Christ's anger toward the Jewish leadership would apply equally today to the leaders of other religious systems including Christianity which teaches, for the most part, that God's law is done away and no longer applicable to Christians.

Although Christ got angry, he dealt with the facts at hand. So his was not an emotional outburst. Instead, it was very thoughtful and controlled. However, if anger is uncontrolled and leads to cursing God or our fellowman, it is a sin,

And I (Christ) say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be held subject to the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca!' (empty-headed man) will be held subject to the council; and whoever shall say, 'you godless one,' (3474 Gk. *mōros*, foolish, thoughts devoid of understanding, i.e. a godless one; expressed as a curse) will be held subject to the fire of Gehenna (Gr. 1067, [freq. translated, *hell*]; being put to death as a criminal and then burned outside the city) (Mt. 5:22; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Uncontrolled anger can be very harmful to others and there are many examples of this in scripture,

Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty (violence) are in their habitation. ⁶ Let not my soul enter their counsel; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for **in their anger they slew a man**, and in their self-will they hamstrung (lamed) an ox. ⁷ **Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel!** I (God) will divide them in Jacob (amongst the twelve tribes) and scatter them in Israel (i.e. when 10 of the tribes were scattered throughout the nations by the Assyrians) (Gen. 49:5-7; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; cf. 1Kgs. 14:15-16; 2Kgs. 17:5-23).

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 (toward) you, but you should rule over it.' ⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; (and said 'Let us go out to the field'; LXX, Syr., Vg.), and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him (Gen. 4:6-8; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

When anger is aroused, but it is not because someone is committing a sin, there is a possibility that the motive is wrong, in which case, the advice in Ephesians 4:26a needs to be taken seriously. Had Cain done what the Lord commanded him to do (See study: God is Seen and Heard), there is a high likelihood that Abel would not have been killed, and Cain would not have sinned by murdering his brother,

... do not let the sun go down on your wrath ... (Eph. 4:26a).

By harboring anger for an extended period of time, it gives the Adversary an opportunity to make matters worse. This is exactly what happened between Cain and Abel even though Cain had been given a warning from God about his attitude. Cain simply refused to heed the advice and repent,

... nor give place (opportunity) to the devil (Eph. 4:26b; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Although someone may do something that is annoying, God's advice is to be careful not to have a knee-jerk reaction, which most people have if they are easily prone to anger,

Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7:9; emphasis added).

The Bible is clear that the Lord gets angry at sinful acts, but He does not react instantaneously,

The Lord is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in mercy (Ps. 103:8; cf. 145:8; Neh. 9:17; Jon. 4:2; Jl. 2:13; Nah. 1:3).

Being slow to get angry allows the time necessary to analyze all the facts in any given situation. There are often many different points and perspectives to be considered. This is why someone who does not have a knee-jerk reaction can often contribute to a peaceful outcome, as the following scriptures confirm,

A wrathful man stirs up strife, but **he who is slow to anger allays contention** (calms things down and helps keep everything in its proper perspective) (Prov. 15:18; cf. 16:32; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:19-20; cf. Prov. 17:27).

Anyone who purports to have God's Holy Spirit working in their lives, will be in control of their anger,

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ **to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance** (patience), to perseverance godliness (2Pet. 1:5-6; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The originator and propagator of uncontrolled anger is Satan the devil. Because he is the epitome of self-centeredness, if he doesn't get what he wants he responds by having a temper tantrum, which is usually very destructive,

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea! **For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath** (anger), because he knows that he has a short time (before his judgment; cf. Jn. 16:11) (Rev. 12:12; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Being in the company of anyone who is easily prone to anger can have a negative effect on those who keep company with such a person,

Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, ²⁵ lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul (Prov. 22:24-25).

In conclusion, the Lord expresses anger at sinful acts but any action He takes is carefully weighed. In contrast, because mankind is easily influenced by Satan and the fallen host of heaven, anger is often impulsive and destructive. The latter expression of anger is what God condemns. Consequently, there is no contradiction in the scriptures dealing with the subject of anger; just confusion on the part of some who prefer to discredit God's word rather than rightly dividing scripture (2Tim. 2:15).

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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