



"Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."
—Carrie Fisher

08-Mar-13

Hidden Anger (Part Two)

In Part One, we saw that anger can be outwardly visible, but it can also show up in ways that are subtle, indirect, and deceptive. [Proverbs 26:24-26](#) provides an example of this:

He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself; when he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

Solomon describes a hateful individual, and in such a person the related works of the flesh—contention, jealousy, selfish ambitions, and dissension—also probably exist. An "outburst of wrath" is also here, but not in the way that we would normally think. Everything this person does *is* his "outburst of wrath," except that it is more like a tamped-down volcanic eruption in slow motion. It oozes out, rather than exploding. It does not possess visual or even verbal intensity, nor is there obvious fury or violence. The anger, malice, and violence are hidden and smooth (see [Proverbs 10:18](#)). The anger can only be observed by its effect on others, rather than in full-bore, red-faced fury resulting in bloodshed. The injuries from this man are not physical; his

aggression may be quite passive. Nevertheless, his anger still reaches out and attempts to destroy, though he may not even be aware of what is taking place, nor admit to being angry.

Something similar is found in [Proverbs 6:12-15](#) (*The Amplified Bible*):

A worthless person, a wicked man, is he who goes about with a perverse (contrary, wayward) mouth. He winks with his eyes, he speaks by shuffling or tapping with his feet, he makes signs [to mislead and deceive] and teaches with his fingers. Willful and contrary in his heart, he devises trouble, vexation, and evil continually; he lets loose discord and sows it. Therefore upon him shall the crushing weight of calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken, and that without remedy.

These people have something burning inside them, motivating them to the wickedness that is described in both proverbs. Something impels them to carry out their plans, regardless of the cost to others, and they perhaps even rejoice at the price others have to pay ([Proverbs 17:5](#); [21:10](#)). These are angry individuals, but their anger is hidden and finds its way out in subtle and creative ways. [Proverbs 16:29-30](#) speaks of "a violent man [who] entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good. He winks his eye to devise perverse things; he purses his lips [as if in concealment] and brings about evil."

The apostle Paul warns against anger and its cousins in nearly all of his epistles. But how he handles the topic requires extra consideration. For example, in [Romans 12:17-19](#), he writes:

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

He had earlier commended the Romans because of their reputation for great [faith](#) ([Romans 1:8](#)). It does not seem plausible that these faithful Christians in Rome were tracking down their enemies, Dirty Harry-style, and exacting

vigilante justice. The "evil," "wrath," and "vengeance" about which Paul warns do not have to be so dramatic. They could be as simple as repaying one little morsel of [gossip](#) with another little bit of hearsay. It could manifest itself in saying something that may be perfectly true about someone else, but is not appropriate—or helpful—to say because godly [love](#) covers a multitude of sins. But anger and its ilk can be manifested in little ways—in secret ways—in which no fury is observed and maybe only a little damage is done—perhaps just enough to bring another down to size.

The congregation at Ephesus he admonishes to put away "bitterness, wrath, anger, [quarreling], and evil speaking" ([Ephesians 4:31](#)). Similarly, in [Colossians 3:8](#), he says to put off "anger, wrath, and malice." How were these attributes showing up? The Ephesians and Colossians were probably neither burning down their neighbors' stables nor poisoning their neighbors' donkeys. Today, we do not hear of church members slashing the tires of other members' cars or of church services ending in fistfights. These kinds of manifestations, which we might think of when we hear of anger, wrath, and malice, would clearly be crossing the line into the absurd for a converted church member. Yet, Paul makes a point to mention these same elements of anger seemingly wherever he went. Why?

The simple fact is there are many manifestations of anger, many applications of malice, and many degrees of intensity and visibility of wrath. Regardless of the details, however, a person's ungodly anger can only destroy both himself and others. If he does not deal with it and remove it, it may escape in various guises to carry out its carnage (see [Proverbs 29:22](#)).

Hidden anger can show up in purposeful unfaithfulness in commitments, leaving another person hanging. It may foster little bits of chaos in other people's environments. It might reveal itself in intentional procrastination for the sake of keeping others off balance, or in doing a task poorly because the individual did not want to do it in the first place. It can manifest itself in refraining from doing good when it is in a person's power to do so. It may be disclosed in giving mixed messages for the sake of leaving other people confused, or withholding necessary information as a way of "punishing" another and leaving him at a disadvantage. It might arise in the form of secretly rejoicing at another's calamity, or pouting when things go well for a rival.

These things may seem minor at first, but consider what it would be like to live with a being with these attributes *for eternity*. When we consider that the heart is behind the anger, whether subtle or obvious, we can see why [God](#) says that those who practice such things—those who make a habit of anger and its cousins—will not fit in His Family. In contrast, [Jesus](#) says that His disciples are those who love one another, meaning they look out for the well-being of others, even if it requires personal sacrifice. Such love does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not think evil, and does not rejoice in iniquity (see I Corinthians 13).

In Part Three, we will see what mankind has observed about hidden anger, as well as biblical instruction for overcoming it.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Anger \(Part Two\)](#)

by Martin G. Collins

We dare not let the sun go down on our anger. We must be especially careful about uncontrolled anger, which, if turned inward, can be a major contributory cause of depression, hypertension, and retardation or prevention of healing. People who have difficulty controlling anger take four times as long to heal, corroborating the biblical admonitions not to fret, but to be slow to anger. Jesus Christ suggests that evil ruminations from within produce toxic defilement, including depression. King Ahab's emotional immaturity and uncontrolled anger fomented such depression that he rationalized Naboth's murder. We dare not allow anger to consume us, but instead should make active attempts at reconciliation with our adversaries. Our own forgiveness, prayer, and worship are jeopardized when we fail to reconcile. Cain, Moses, David, James, and John were all rebuked by Almighty God for not controlling their tempers and their tongues, allowing Satan to get a foothold. If we are angry at our brother, being unable to forgive him, we tie God's hand in forgiving us.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[In the Grip of Distrust](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Most are aware of a phenomenon that too often takes place within the church of God: If an attitude or trend develops in the world, we can expect it will soon enter the church. Society today struggles under an attitude of deep distrust for institutions and leaders. John Ritenbaugh explains that, in the church, this attitude has led to an increase of independent Christians, a situation contrary to the concept of unity in the Body of Christ.

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
