

Anger (Part One)

Sinful Anger Versus Righteous Anger

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The world is becoming angrier; I am sure that comes as no surprise! Just look at people's faces as they move about in their daily activities at home, at school, on television, or in the movies. Sadly, God's church is not immune to anger. It is a common characteristic of human nature.

Sometimes anger is hidden and smoldering. They often do not express it openly. On the surface, things look calm. But under the surface, these people are boiling mad. If it goes on long enough, eventually, they will implode.

Others explode—they blow up; they lose their temper and you see churning anger in their eyes. Their anger is explosive.

Neither type of anger is healthy. High blood pressure, migraine headaches, nervousness, and anxiety are all connected with anger. Uncontrolled anger causes spiritual problems, especially lack of inner peace and joy. God's Spirit is impeded when anger rules.

Whether anger is up front and explosive or hidden and implosive, it is among the most devastating "works of the flesh." Years of pent-up anger and built-up hostility can become a bomb waiting to blow. It can explode or it can implode; when it does, it destroys. Angry people tear at the fabric of their relationships; they tear at their mates, at their children, and even at the church.

In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul illustrates and is very clear about what is meant by putting off the old man, and what is meant by putting on the new man. He is concerned with the doctrine of the church, the unity of the church, the church as the Body of Christ, and our being members together and individually of the same Body.

Ephesians 4:26-27 "Be angry, and do not sin." Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

Paul quotes this from Psalm 4:4. In effect, Paul explains that we must put off that old life of sin and put on this new life of holiness because sin is not only something that is wrong in and of itself and indicative of the old life—sin always breaks fellowship; and that is Paul's immediate practical concern at this specific point in his epistle—sin breaks fellowship.

Holiness on the other hand always promotes fellowship, and as he deals with these specific examples and illustrations he obviously has that in mind the whole time. Here in Ephesians 4:26-27 we find Paul dealing with something else besides lying, as he did in verse 25, which not only breaks the fellowship among Christians but again violates the whole fundamental basis and foundation of God's way of life. So he takes up the issue of anger, a very common source of sin and disruption in the life of the church.

Paul does not merely deal with this problem from the standpoint of morality, or of pagan philosophy, but specifically from God's perspective. And, that is the only way we, as Christians, should face every single problem that confronts us in life. Our way of tackling these problems should be totally unlike that of the world.

We see in Paul's statement in Ephesians 4:26-27 four major principles that form a whole doctrine. The first is 'be angry,' the second is 'do not sin,' the third is 'do not let the sun go down on your wrath,' and the fourth is 'nor give place to the Devil.'

"Be angry." With that emphasis, what does Paul mean by this statement, "Be angry, and do not sin"?

There are some people who think that it means that if you cannot get rid of anger altogether, the best thing to do is to suppress it, and to hold it down as much as you can. But that is the wrong way to deal with it.

The scripture does not express anything like that. That is what the world does, and the result is that every once in awhile when a person is taken unaware by circumstances, the trap door suddenly opens and the whole thing reappears as violent as it ever was before. No, suppression is certainly not the answer; it is not the Christian way of dealing with anger and its problems.

So, what does Paul mean? It is obvious that this is a positive command. It is not some concession that is made to a weakness. He says that it is our duty to be angry in certain respects, but that we must never be angry in a sinful manner, never in a temper, never out of control.

There are times when we are meant to be angry. "Be angry," Paul says, but never in a way that becomes sinful, and never in a way that opens the door of opportunity to Satan.

How can this paradox be reconciled? It is important to take Paul's statements as he puts them, starting with, "Be angry." In other words, there is a right kind of anger. Anger is a capacity within humans that results in our being stirred up by the sight of certain things.

Not all anger is wrong. Just as there are beneficial kinds of fear as mentioned in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," so also, there are positive uses of anger.

In the Old Testament there are examples of seemingly appropriate ways to express anger. Here is one example: Pharaoh's adamant refusal to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt caused Moses to be very angry, but the text says he simply left Pharaoh's presence, taking no immediate action.

Exodus 11:8 And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, and all the people who follow you!' After that I will go out." Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

Moses was probably angry at Pharaoh for causing the death of the firstborn of Egypt—millions of people. Also, the Psalms present numerous examples of anger directed toward the injustice of cruel people (Psalm 59:11; 69:28).

Psalm 7:11 God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

But God's anger is constructive, solution-oriented, and under the control of His supreme intelligence and perspective.

Jesus Christ set us an example that anger is not always sinful, and in reality something that is altogether right in and of itself. Notice the statement that is made in the gospel of Mark about Christ Himself healing on the Sabbath, "He had looked around at the Pharisees with anger." (Mark 3:1-5)

A similar statement is found in Luke's gospel.

Luke 13:15 The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite!"

One of these lawyers—Pharisees, teachers of the law—was trying to trap Him and to trip Him, and Jesus turned on him and said, 'Hypocrite!' He spoke with anger!

Jesus knew there is a time to be indignant. In John 2, He forcefully drove out the moneychangers who were defiling the Temple by trading in it.

John 2:15-17 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

Here, Jesus was in righteous anger and indignation, making a scourge of small cords and literally driving the moneychangers out and cleansing the Temple. Christ directed His anger toward sin, *not* toward people. He controlled Himself at all times by the power of the Spirit of God.

Jesus Christ was "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," as James tells us we need to be.

James 1:19-20 So then, 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.

Furthermore, no one who is at all familiar with the Bible can have failed to notice a term that is used constantly in the Old Testament and the New Testament about God Himself—the wrath of *God*. For example the apostle Paul writing to the Romans says,

Romans 1:16-18 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

The wrath of God! Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ preached and exhorted people to, "Flee from the wrath to come." The apostle John in Revelation 6:17, speaking about the end of the world, of time, history, and about the judgment that will be ushered in by God says graphically, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" So we realize that this is something that we must not shrug off.

Also the apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians in II Corinthians 7, makes this thing quite explicit and shows how at a given point we should feel anger and a righteous indignation, with ourselves. He is talking about godly sorrow, and he says,

II Corinthians 7:10-11 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Indignation! Anger! They were angry with themselves and the cause of the trouble, with the man who had sinned, and with their own failure to recognize the sin, and with their failure to react to it as they should have done.

The lesson for us is that we should always be angry against and about sin and evil. "Be angry," says the apostle Paul! In a sense he is just putting into New Testament language what one of the psalms puts like this, "You who love the Lord, hate evil!" (Psalm 97:10)

These two things go together: If you really love God you must hate evil; evil and sin are definitely to be hated.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

It is not at all surprising the apostle Paul gives the exhortation to the church at Ephesus to "Be angry." He describes these Gentiles and their manner of life before their conversion.

Ephesians 4:18-19 Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

"Past feeling" meant that their consciences had become calloused and hardened. Their sensibilities had become dull and blunted. They could not react to anything; they were past feeling. They were so steeped in sin that nothing could move them or shock them any longer.

They were past feeling! They had become morally indifferent; they had become unconcerned about decency. This is always characteristic of godlessness and moral bankruptcy.

It is one of the terrible aspects of paganism that men and women become so steeped in sin that they are not aware of the fact that they are sinning. They

cannot react at all, they never feel any sense of indignation or horror; they never become angry at all; they are past feeling.

Romans 1:18-32 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and [divine nature], so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Men and women had forgotten God and were worshipping birds and four-footed beasts and insects; they were also worshipping one another. And not only had they become immoral, they had almost lost a sense of morality; they were guilty of the most filthy and repulsive perversions. The whole world had become a cauldron of iniquity.

In reaction to this horribly degenerate mental state and spiritual condition, Paul says to the Ephesians, "You have the right to flee from the world's sins; you have to learn to be angry about them; you must be stirred up; you can't allow yourselves to be complacent and say that sin doesn't matter!" Such an attitude belonged to their past, he said, but they must not be like that any longer. A failure to react with indignation and anger against sin and evil is always a sign of moral decadence and of godlessness and moral bankruptcy.

There is a word from the prophet Jeremiah that describes sin at its peak. Let me give you the climax to his whole statement because it is such a great one. Listen to this:

Jeremiah 8:12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; in the time of their punishment they shall be cast down," says the LORD.

What a terrible state to get into! We are not quite hopeless while we can still blush; it means that there is still something in us that makes us feel a sense of indignation and of shame and of anger. But some people had become so sunk in sin that Jeremiah says, "Neither could they blush."

We see this sort of thing almost every time we turn on the news.

1. female teachers pose nude or have affairs with children
2. male pedophiles abusing boys
3. silence if you support the gays day at children's schools
4. a President who makes no apology, nor is he embarrassed for his murderous abortion policies against our children.

Jeremiah 8:12-19 "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; in the time of their punishment they shall be cast down," says the LORD. "I will surely consume them," says the LORD. "No grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter the fortified cities, and let us be silent there. For the LORD our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and there was trouble! The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan. The whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of His strong ones; for they have come and devoured the land and all that is in it, the city and those who dwell in it. "For behold, I will send serpents among you, vipers which cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you," says the LORD. I would comfort myself in sorrow; my heart is faint in me. Listen! The voice, the cry of the daughter of my people from a far country: "Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in her?" "Why have they provoked Me to anger with their carved images—with foreign idols?"

Now what we need, if we are in the condition of not being ashamed or being able to blush, is the exhortation of the apostle Paul. Be angry! Stir up yourselves! Do not allow yourselves to be governed by that old worldly mentality! Put off the old man, put on the new man! We must learn to be really angry against iniquity and sin.

God made us in such a way that that should be our natural reaction; it was the natural reaction of Jesus Christ Himself; it is God's reaction to sin.

This exhortation to anger is needed in the world today against sin and immorality; instead we see it flare up in a small way over things like unfair

taxation and illegal immigration—both are important civil issues, but they do not hold near the perverseness of sins like homosexuality, pedophilia, sex slave trade, murder, and adultery.

Is not one of the greatest tragedies in the world today the failure to feel moral indignation and wrath because of things that are happening? Is there not a fatal tendency to be complacent and to explain everything away, and to remain indifferent?

Even though we hear people on radio, television, and the Internet deliberately teaching that evil is good and good is evil, still there seems to be little or no protest. As a nation and as the world, we seem to have lost the capacity to be stirred up morally by a sense of indignation.

This is definitely one of the major problems today. There has been a steady decline in morals, not only in behavior, but also in outlook and in reaction. We merely shrug our shoulders and allow sin to go unrebuked.

This was true of the attitude of the world to fascist Hitler before the Second World War. The world could not be bothered, people wanted to go on enjoying themselves and having a good old time, and they somehow hoped that the world's troubles would not affect them and all would be well. And so, the whole sorry process was allowed to start and continue into suffering and death.

We see the same attitude and lack of action today in this country. The writing is on the wall for this nation; we have almost succeeded in becoming socialist and fascist, and we are headed full speed into communism—communitarianism, progressivism—whatever the government of the New World Order will be called. The Beast power is rising. It is very clear.

But this is not only evident in our attitude towards international affairs as, for example, towards the rise of dictators, and the toleration of things in nations, which should never be tolerated, but it is also creeping into the whole of life.

We are being lied to publicly by the pop-culture media that certain perversions are natural. The plain fact is that the whole category of sin is rapidly disappearing. Many are claiming that there is no such thing as sin.

We are told by the propaganda machine of the social engineers that people are born like this or that, he just has that tendency in him, and it is very strong in him, and not so in another.

We are told there are new diseases now to explain away sin, such as alcoholism and gluttony. Evil is explained away; there is no protest; there is no moral indignation. And it is into such a situation as this that the word of the apostle Paul, part of the inspired written Word of God, is "Be angry!" Learn to react against these things! Feel a sense of indignation!

There are certain things that should stir us up and should be denounced. An absence of a sense of shame and of anger and of righteous indignation is always the hallmark of deep degradation, and repulsive sinfulness, and a loss of the sense of God.

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was angry when He observed manifestations of sin. Sin separates us from God, so how close or, maybe I should say how far away from Him are we when we commit sin? Actually, we have a Christian duty to be angry at certain points and with respect to certain matters of sin.

Now we move on to the second major principle, "Do not sin." To the exhortation to be angry, Paul adds the balancing principle, "Do not sin!" Be angry, and do not sin—in this he is saying, "Don't be angry in a sinful manner."

We have been looking at the right kind of anger; we now must look to the wrong kind of anger. Notice that we are walking on a kind of knife's edge. In other words, we can easily swing from one extreme to the other if we are not careful.

Earlier in Ephesians 4:15 the apostle Paul tells us to speak the truth in love. Some people put the whole emphasis on truth, while others put it on love; the first set of people have no love, the second set of people have no truth; so they are both wrong, because we have to speak the truth in love! Similarly, here, "Be angry, and do not sin!"

There is a wrong way of being angry. And what is it? What must we never be guilty of?

First, we must never become or remain bad-tempered people. That is entirely and utterly wrong. To be bad-tempered, to be irritable or irascible, is something that is sinful and is condemned everywhere in the Scriptures.

So it is no use saying, "I was born this way." If we are true Christians, we have been born again, so we must not use that false perverse argument. It is wrong anytime and anywhere to be angry in the wrong way. We are not to explain what we do in terms of "the balance of the various ductless glands," because that would be to do away with sin. We have to know ourselves and we have to deal with ourselves; we are forbidden to be bad-tempered, irritable, irascible people.

But we do not stop at that; there is another thing that we have to not be. We must not be easily provoked. One of the superb things about love is that it is not easily provoked.

I Corinthians 13:4-7 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A person who is easily provoked is bound to fall into sin very frequently. We must not be fiery. On the positive side though, James describes the wisdom from above, the exact opposite of fiery.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

We must not be easily irritated; but how easily aggravated some of us are by all sorts of things!

Now here is the test. Are you easily put off or put out by anything? It does not matter what it is. And can it upset you, disturb you, keep your mind on it, and prevent your concentrating on something else? We have to seek after the love that enables us to bear all things. But we must go further. Any anger or expression of anger that is excessive, violent, uncontrollable, or out of control, is a wrong kind of anger.

A term used to be used about a man being in a towering rage. That is definitely sinful. Another phrase used is about people seething with anger or shaking with anger. That is sinful. The red face, the body trembling, the temple veins bulging, and the eyes blazing is always sin. We have all seen that kind of anger before. That kind of anger is altogether wrong and sinful. It shows a lack of self-control, and a person with that kind of attitude is being angry in a sinful way.

The overwhelming majority of instances of anger in the Old Testament speak of God's anger both against His chosen people and against pagan nations. God's anger differs, however, from most examples of human anger.

Expressions of God's anger exhibit no loss of self-control. Rather, as an act of God's will, His anger results in deliberate judgments against sin—actions appropriate to the situation and in keeping with His own character—holy and just.

The next thing is also found in the apostle Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry, and do not sin." Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

I do not want to talk about not letting the sun go down at this point; I just want to look at this word wrath here for a moment. We will cover the principle about the sun going down in my next sermon.

In the original, the word "wrath" is not the same word as anger; it is a much stronger word than anger. Here in verse 26, it means exasperation; it means anger that is roused, nursed, and nourished until it becomes a settled condition; it means hatred, bitterness of spirit, and vindictiveness.

It means that you are determined to seek vengeance and absolutely determined get it. It is an entrenched condition of anger; it has become part and parcel of you; it is a mood; it is a condition that is permanent; and it is bitter and hateful.

That is the wrath as Paul uses the word here, but that is not the wrath of God, there is nothing of that in God's wrath. What Paul is condemning is the wrong sort of anger. The anger that we are to feel as Christians must never be felt by us just because we happen to be the sort of person that easily becomes heated. That is always wrong.

In the same way our anger must never be personal, but rather against the principle of iniquity and sin. Our anger must never be the result of our being the kind of person who is considered peppery and testy, and always a bit on edge, easily provoked and ready to explode.

That is the thing that we are required to put off. In other words, the anger that Paul is talking about is an anger that should always be stirred up against evil and sin—those things that caused the anger and the indignation seen in Jesus Christ.

Let us understand the process of anger. Anger grows in three ways:

The first way anger grows is that we choose to feel and express anger by absorbing Satan's own spirit of disobedience.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Satan plants thoughts of anger and hostility in our minds. He injects anger because he is always angry. We subsequently choose to think and act as Satan himself does, instead of thinking and acting the way God does!

We are not born with anger. It is a spiritual problem. Anger comes into our mind from Satan from the day we are born. He starts impressing thoughts and attitudes into our mind as if our mind was set in cement.

Our nature becomes like Satan's as we choose to act on those thoughts and attitudes. Until we repent of following Satan's way and let God build His character in us, we are by nature children of wrath.

The second way anger grows is that the environment in which we live influences us. A child is impressionable; he acquires traits through the modeling and identification process as he grows up. His environment affects him.

If he has an angry parent, he will learn to be angry. If his mother is hostile toward his father, or if his father has an explosive temper, he will acquire an angry outlook on life. It will build up in layers. Satan will first pump anger into the child's mind. Then the child will acquire more and more anger through the modeling process.

Parents, then, have the responsibility to counteract Satan's influence in their children's minds and set the example of peace in the home. Anger promotes rebellion; anger promotes disobedience; anger makes it easier to become offended and to leave God's church.

King Solomon had something to say about the peaceless effect of anger from our environment.

Proverbs 21:9 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

Proverbs 21:19 Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.

So Solomon is saying it is better to move to the middle of nowhere, than to live in the same house with an angry woman (or, angry man). How sad it is, then, for a child to live in such a family environment.

The third way anger grows is by incomplete and inappropriate parenting. A child needs to feel loved and wanted. He needs structure, discipline, affection, and support from his family. If parenting is incomplete in these areas, anger will build in a child.

A lot of angry teens are just trying to get even with their parents or with the world. Teenage delinquency stems from insufficient parenting. But God says if children honor and obey their parents, life will go well for them. They will grow up into solid, stable adults and live long on the earth.

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Incompetent parents can create angry children.

How can parents avoid provoking wrath? They can by bringing them up "in the training and admonition of the Lord." This means lots of loving, lots of instruction in God's way of life, and just discipline.

Paul has something to add about provoking our children.

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

This does not refer to a onetime bout with discouragement, but it is something that becomes a permanent problem.

Many people try to control anger because it is socially expected that we do so. But without God's help, most people deal with anger in the wrong way. Quickly, I have three wrong ways this happens.

The first wrong way to deal with anger is by burying it. Denying anger and stuffing it in the back of your mind is not the right way to handle it. Humans often do not realize they are angry, but the sharp look in their eyes could drill

holes in you. So it may not be obvious to them, but it is written all over their face and everyone else knows it.

People who bury anger within them sit there and try to smile and act in control. But then, they jump in their car and burn rubber off their tires as they careen down the road.

King Solomon has advice for us on this.

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

People who bury anger do not realize it, and to make things worse, they have thousands of pounds of metal and glass under their power when they drive away. People bury anger because they do not want to admit they have the problem.

The second wrong way to deal with anger is by bottling it up. This is similar to burying anger, but it differs in that you realize you are angry, but you do not deal with it properly. You hold it in and put a plug on it. It is a form of implosion. Anger stays inside and it builds up.

Sometimes people will admit they had a problem with anger and had a temper before their conversion, but now they say, "I can control it! I just don't let it out." But, the veins on their necks are sticking out even as they say it. The problem is the anger ultimately will implode on the inside and create all kinds of havoc in the body. Many physical problems come from bottled-up anger.

The third wrong way to deal with anger is by ventilating it. Ventilation means letting the anger pour out. Some misguided psychologists advise people to let the anger out before it hurts them psychologically; they tell their patients to verbalize it. You have heard the extreme of this before. They will tell you something like, "Once a day, go into a padded room in your house so nobody can hear you, and then stand there for 10 minutes and scream. Then you will feel better." But you will not feel any better because anger feeds on itself.

Letting your anger out in little dribbles is not good, either. Little barbs and nasty remarks may make you feel better temporarily, but you will not be better. Behavior such as this does nothing to promote peace and harmony between people. In fact, it leads to conflict.

So, what is the solution? There is a biblical solution to anger. Here are three basic, simple things that can apply to anger or almost any other sin you want to overcome for that matter.

You face most anger as sin. Unrighteous anger is a work of the flesh that must be overcome.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Go to God and specifically confess the anger. King David did. He talked about what was wrong with him in vivid terms.

Psalms 32:3-5 When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

David is saying that when he did not at first confess his sin to God, when he pretended he was not angry, he did finally have to admit it! God is the one who brings us to repentance. Acknowledge the anger to God in your life openly and humbly, and God will forgive you.

Ask God for the power of the Holy Spirit to supernaturally remove anger, wrath, and malice from your nature. Satan's spirit of disobedience, the

environment around you, and probably inadequate parenting created anger in you. God's Spirit can take it out of you.

Just containing anger is not the final solution or even *a* solution. If you are at a stage where that is all you can do, that is a start; but it is far better to get rid of the anger completely.

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Bitterness is something that always expresses itself in speech and in action; so after naming it, the apostle Paul mentions wrath and anger as forces frequently behind behavior. Wrath means violent excitement or agitation of the mind, a kind of boiling over; whereas anger is a more settled and regular state and condition of the mind. Anger is never at the same white heat as wrath; it is a more settled condition of the mind and of the spirit. Both wrath and anger tend to express themselves in speech, as does bitterness.

There are certain problems of the flesh that we do control. Then, there are certain other problems that God says He can take away completely. For example, sexual impulses are meant to be there. God created our sex drive. He did not design it to be removed. He will give us the power to control it in obedience to His law. So we do not ask God to take away our sex drive. We have the responsibility to control it.

There seems to be certain attitudes, though, that God says, with time, and if we stay close to Him, He will remove from our minds. Vanity, anger, and pride must be put away if we are to be in God's Kingdom.

Through the working of the Spirit of God in us, we can control and ultimately remove unrighteous anger from our lives.

Ephesians 4:29-32 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

God, who owed us nothing, because of His kindness, His tenderheartedness, His love, His grace, His mercy, and His compassion, not only sent His Son into the world of sin and shame, but even to the crucifixion that we might be forgiven. God bore the suffering Himself in His own Son.

If He has done that for us, can we possibly refuse forgiveness to another? It is inconceivable. Can we refuse forgiveness to any, even though he may have hurt us to the very depths of our being? A person who knows true forgiveness has a broken and contrite heart; he realizes he is a shameful wretch to whom God owes nothing, but for whom God sent His only Son, and the Son has borne all his sin and iniquity; and salvation is being given as a free gift entirely and altogether and only in Christ.

Become kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.