

Holiness: Anger Problems (1)

So...(as I've studied this passage) it seems **anger** the main theme here. (v.26) talks about Anger, then (v.31) it shows up again with 6 different types of anger. ---So I'll start by saying this...

- **Anger** is a much bigger deal than we think it is.
- **Anger** is a much more pervasive emotion than we probably realize.

I'll go so far as to say... (without question) you do have an anger problem. If NOT right this second, you did last week, or you will later today. Anger is a lot more a part of our lives than we probably realize.

---Ex: I heard a man whose been counseling for over 30yrs say, that he believes "*over 90% of those he counsels, anger is a big part of the problem.*"

- What landed most people in **prison** today, crimes committed in anger?
- Why does most **divorces** happen? -b/c the couple can't deal with their anger
- What is the source of almost every problem in the local church? -anger.

There's hundreds of manifestations of anger that we probably don't realize stem from anger.

- If you have a problem **being critical**, your real problem is anger. ---Christians don't like to admit they're critical, "*I'm not a critical person, I'm just logical & rational*" -but they're critical, and that's a manifestation of anger.
- If you complain a lot... you might not want to admit you complain, "*I just care about people doing things the right way*" -no your critical, which shows your angry. And some of you might (even now) be thinking critical thoughts about my comment on being critical, but that's probably just b/c your angry.

Q) Am I making you angry?

- **Pride** is very often connected with anger, b/c anger says "*I'm right and everyone else is wrong!*"
- Many believe **depression** is caused by anger, (it's not the only cause) but one of them. So many might say, "*I'm not angry I'm depressed*" but maybe you're depressed b/c you're angry. Some psychologists say "*depression is anger turned inward*"
- Some say... anger is a cause of some sexual addictions & eating disorders
- One leading Health website said, "*Unresolved anger issues lead to **anxiety**, which might include dizziness, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle pain, muscle tension, headaches, and problems with concentration and memory. Such symptoms can add to generalized anger about life.*" -So the more angry you get, it leads to more anger about the fact that you are angry.

Anger really is a root issue of many other problems. So I want to take 2wks and really try to study this passage and get some help -understanding Anger (and how to handle this)

So let's start by defining anger. --- (Here's **Tim Keller's** definition) "Anger is energy aroused in defense of something good and released against something evil." ---Now, that's a strange definition, after going through all the problems anger causes, and now here's a definition telling us Anger is good. ---But we know anger is good b/c (v.26) says what? "*Be angry*" We're actually commanded to be angry. Anger is a good thing. Which is surprising to many b/c we usually think of anger as a bad emotion. But actually **Anger is a good emotion that often goes bad**. --- (The reality is) ---We were created in the image of a God who is angry.

- (**Psalms**) says, "*God is angry at the wicked everyday*" -God-hates-evil!
- In **David's** best moments he said, "*I hate your enemies with a perfect hatred*"
- Jesus got angry at injustice and sin... (why?) -b/c he was good & righteous & cared about people.

If you say, "*I'm never angry about anything*" -what you're saying is... '*I'm actually a very evil person, I'm heart-less, in-loving, with no compassion for others.*' -B/c some things are so evil to NOT get angry about them shows you are evil yourself. ---To see suffering & injustice of innocent children and then say "*It's NOT a big deal*" and be careless and apathetic about sin committed against them, shows I'm wicked.

- The goal isn't to stop being angry. **Be angry** is a command. We're in sin if we don't obey this command.
- The goal isn't to stop being angry, it's to learn how to be angry without sinning.

Anger is a good emotion gone bad. There's really NOT any emotion that's bad, just emotions that go bad b/c of sin.

- Philosopher **Aristotle** (in his famous work on "Ethics") taught anger was good, saying, "*The man who is angry at the right things, with the right people, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought, is praised.*" ----We should be angry (b/c) God is angry ...but we must be angry in the rights ways.
- **Martin Luther King**, "*Righteous anger is directed at problems not people*" ---(2x)

Here's what we need to understand (and probably already do)... **Anger is destructive.**

- God uses his anger to defend righteousness & destroy wickedness.
- **Our Anger** (when used rightly) defends & destroys the right things, at the right times, in the right ways, but when its corrupted by sin, it destroys in very harmful ways.
- **Our anger** used rightly can bring much good in the world & rid the earth of much evil. ----BUT...
- **Sinful anger** will destroy other people (if you let it out)
- **Sinful anger** will destroy you (if you hold it in) –literally!

Ex: I don't know all the medical terminology for it, but its well established in the medical field at this point that anger (when held inside us) can cause "*headache, digestion problems, such as abdominal pain, insomnia, increased anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, skin problems, such as eczema, heart attack, stroke, and ultimately death.*" ----So if you say, "*I won't release my anger, I'll just hold it in*" –just understand it will begin to destroy you literally, b/c anger is destructive (in its essence).

Ex: I remember when I was probably about 11-12yrs old I obviously couldn't get a real job, but I'd go around the neighborhood and knock on doors and ask if I could mow grass or rake yards, and this one older man whose yard I'd rake was always really mean with me, and wouldn't even pay me and would just come criticize me. And it wasn't just me, he had a reputation in town of suing everyone and causing problems in various churches. And one day, my dad told me he died, and I remember asking my dad about it and he said, "*a lot of people really believe his anger killed him*" and that's probably right, I think he had a stroke that was probably induced by anger. ----But it doesn't just destroy **us**, it destroys **others**...

(Gal 5:15) "*If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*"

- It doesn't just say the relationship will be destroyed
- It says the people will be destroyed

Anger will begin to destroy all those who stand in its path. That's why **(Prov 22:24)** "*Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered*"

- **Single girls**, don't marry a guy with an anger problem, b/c you will be his main target (once you get married), and (once you have kids) your children will be.
- **Single guys**, don't marry this type of girl, **(Prov 19 & 21)** say, "*It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious wife.*" ---Why do you think "The Man Cave" exists? –b/c a man's wife has a gentle and quite spirit? –No. The Man Cave was created so men wouldn't have to live on the corner of their roof but could watch the ball-game in the garage and not have to be around an angry nagging wife. Ex: I remember in our old neighborhood, we counted like 6-7 men sitting in their garages watching TV. I'm sure they had TV's inside, so why go outside in the humidity of the FL heat? –B/c nobody wants to live with an angry woman.

Now, what types of anger are we talking about? B/c many people think "*I don't have an anger problem; I'm NOT throwing things at walls or punching people*" ---so **(v.31)** gives us (essentially) 3 types of sinful anger

1. **Bitterness** is what is often called "long-term anger" b/c it doesn't happen over-night. Bitterness happens when Anger is stored up (in your heart) and not dealt with Biblically. And Bitterness is nasty. **(Heb 12:15)** "*see that no root of bitterness springs up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.*" Some people think "*my bitterness will only hurt me*" well it will hurt you, but (Heb 12) says "*it will also defile many others*" also. Q) How does bitterness start?
 - 1) The first seed is that you've been **hurt or offended**. And when you dwell on that offense or hurt or the way they sinned against you, and let it turn into Anger. ---Then...
 - 2) **Anger** keeps piling up in your heart (without forgiving them in Biblical ways) ...and

3) Anger will eventually turn into **bitterness**.

So... If you are bitter it means you have not truly forgiven someone (even if you say "I have") you haven't or you wouldn't be bitter. To put it another way, bitter happens when we respond wrongly when someone has sinned against us. ---**Ex:** So it could be a **spouse** who hurts you, or someone at **work** or in the **church** who has offended you, and if you allow that offense to turn into Anger, and that Anger isn't repented of and forgiveness offered, you will find yourself bitter toward that person. ----You can know you've become bitter when...

- You know you've become bitter when... you're trying to avoid them, or not wanting to talk to them
- You know you've become bitter when... you only focus on the negative parts of that person's life and completely ignore all the positive, or when you're overly sensitive & critical about everything they say.
- Bitterness doesn't allow you to rejoice in the good things but only frustrated about the negative things.

Here are some other evidences of bitterness **Lou Priolo** gives in his book on **Bitterness**, he says, "*difficulty resolving conflicts, acts of vengeance, withdrawal, outbursts of anger, biting sarcasm, speaking down to our condescending communication, talking to the person like there a child or an inferior, criticism, impatience, disrespect, depression, hypersensitivity (little things become really big things, A comment that shouldn't need to be an issue becomes a major issue or big argument), remembering all the details of all the ways that person has sinned against you.*" ---so Paul mentions the 1st type of anger as "Bitterness"

2. **Wrath & Anger** those are internal conditions.

- **Wrath** could also be translated "rage" it's the word "tumos", it means "White-heat", its intense anger inside you. This is the person who heart is just kind of soured, and they're mad at the world, and see everything through the lenses of anger. They find a problem or flaw or something irritating about everyone, especially the people closest to them. (This is how my sinful anger mostly gets displayed, I find that when I'm angry I tend to get really **cynical & critical**. I can try to justify my critical tendencies saying, "*I'm a problem solver, I'm just more logical & analytical*" but actually I'm angry.

3. **Clamor & Slander** are external conditions. "Clamor" I don't really like that translation b/c nobody says that word, it's non-intelligible for most Americans. Other English translations use the word **brawling, fighting**... this is anger that expresses itself externally (physically or verbally)

Those are the 3 types of anger

- 1) **Bitterness** -(anger built up over time... it's densely packed, deeply rooted anger)
- 2) **Blowing-up** -(more external explosive types of anger with words or physical violence)
- 3) **Closing-up** -(internal anger... which doesn't get talked about as much but is a real problem.)

Ex: In most marriages (it seems to me) one spouse usually **blows-up** (more explosive anger, outburst of anger) and everybody knows that person has an anger problem. But what I usually have to help people see is that the spouse that **closes-up** (bottles everything up inside) also has an anger problem. -B/c...

- We all know how destructive explosive anger is. ----But...
- We don't always see how destructive (anger) **closed-up & held in** actually is.
- It could look like distancing yourself emotionally or physically, maybe depriving the other spouse (sexually) ----so... it might NOT look like anger, but it is.
- It's really an expression of **revenge**, "*you hurt me and now I'm going to hurt you by depriving you of something that you desire.*"
- It's a way to **inflict wrath** on someone your mad at "*I'll make them pay for how they hurt me*"
- The person who **blows-up** has a serious anger problem that needs to be dealt with, but also
- The person who **closes-up** (and bottles up their frustration) also has a serious anger problem.

So... what's do we do? What's the solution? How do we overcome anger? -We'll it's NOT just one answer scripture gives us. I do think the biggest answer he gives is at the end of this passage (**v.32**) and (beginning of **Eph 5**) the biggest way to over-come anger is "*putting on compassion, kindness, forgiveness & love.*" ---I think that's where he's ultimately leading us (and we'll get there next week) -but today. He starts where you really have to start. Here's where we really have to start...

1. Commit to Solving Conflicts & Peacemaking

We have to start here, b/c this is where Paul starts (v.26) "*do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil*" –so the first way to deal with anger is to commit to deal with anger. –B/c (this passage says) **undealt with anger** is actually a doorway to the devil.

- If you want to give the devil the opportunity to really work nasty **in the church** –all we must do is avoid conflicts, and don't seek to make peace.
- If you want to welcome Satan right into **your home**, just avoid dealing with conflicts in your marriage.
- If you want to quickly ruin a **relationship** ...just ignore the problem, keep telling yourself "*They're wrong & I'm right*" ...and don't mess with it, and Satan has his open door.

Religious people (and church people) often miss this, "*Oh, we don't have TV b/c we don't let the Devil in our home, we don't listen to that secular devil music, b/c we don't want to let the devil in our home*" but they argue and fight and bicker at each other and don't handle conflict Biblically, they're opening the door much wider for the devil that some vulgar song probably ever would.

Ex: Parents, we'd lay down our lives to protect our kids from some perverse offender or criminal around our children, but scripture's saying, "*If you keep arguing, fighting (in your home) and don't learn to handle your anger problems Biblically, you're letting the most vile criminal and offender to ever walk this earth into your home to mess w/ your kids, and his agenda is to ruin their innocence & destroy them completely*"

Q) Do you want **the Devil** to really mess with your kids? –never learn how to speak kindly with your spouse.

Q) Do you want **Satan himself** to have major influence in your home? –keep arguing, complaining, nagging, and getting angry and don't deal with it these sins Biblically. ---Many parents say, "Yeah, my kids went astray b/c of all the bad influences at school, maybe? But maybe it was the constant tension & anger they saw in their mom and dad growing up? –that's probably more likely the source of the problem.

This is why Paul says, "*You've got to start with a commitment to NOT go to bed angry, don't let the sun go down on your anger*" **Ex:** I've heard many pastors stand before their people and say, "*My wife and I have never let the sun go down on our anger, we've never gone to bed angry*" I'd love to be able to say that, but I can't.

- Many times we've stayed up late talking until we could go to bed reconciled and at peace.
- Many times we've laid there in silence praying, Lord help us, we're both mad" until one of us broke the silence and asked for forgiveness and sought reconciliation.
- Sometimes we've gone to bed with our backs to each other still upset, and just fell asleep. I'm ashamed to say that, but it's true.

This verse says "*don't let the sun go down on your anger*." –and it does apply to married couples. But (in its context) this verse is really talking about (relationships in general) not just marriage. "*Do not let the sun go down on your anger*" is believed by many to be an ancient proverb that meant...

- Don't stay angry long
- Don't delay reconciliation
- Don't take your time pursuing forgiveness
- Don't wait for the other person to make the first move
- Don't even wait until the morning... to reconcile w/ someone (in the church, at work, in your home) deal with conflict immediately! "*before the sun goes down*" ----before the day is over!!!

Q) **Why handle anger quickly?** Well (practically), b/c if you wait a day or two? –You end up just forgetting about it, and moving on... which is how **bitterness** is created. When you just keep ignoring it, not dealing w/ it, trying to forget about it, it piles up, it's getting stored up inside you, and that's how bitterness is formed. And bitterness is probably one of the hardest problems to help someone deal with that I've ever seen.

Q) **How you become bitter?** "*let the sun go down on your anger*" (over & over & over) and don't deal with that anger in Biblical ways, (and w/out realizing it) you'll find some deep-rooted resentment & bitterness.

Now, here's the good news for Christians, **we are** (at our core) **peacemakers**. (Jesus said) "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God*" –Meaning, sons of God are peacemakers.

- God's children don't run from conflict hoping peace will magically happen
- God's children pursue each other to make peace.

Q) Who are the sons of God? –~~those making peace!~~ ----They're easy to identify b/c resemble their Father who sent His only Son down to earth to make peace w/ his enemies.

- We don't like difficult conversations, but we don't avoid them.
- We don't like conflict, but we don't avoid it.

Here's how important this is according to Jesus (**Matt 5:22**) Jesus says "*everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire*" –To NOT deal with conflicts and to keep anger & un-forgiveness is a sure sign you're headed for... judgement & the hell of fire (according to Jesus)... we don't play around with this.

It's tragic that many would rather **leave a church** (and find a new one) or **leave a marriage** (and get a new one) rather than doing the work of Peacemaking.

- How many people **get a divorce** b/c they can't get along thinking the problem is that person, so they get rid of the person, get re-married and realize this person has problems also, so they get divorced trying to find another person they can get along with and they have problems with them, but now their just too tired of all the divorces and re-marriages so they live in a miserable marriage the rest of their life.

Q) What's the real problem? --- (NOT the people they kept divorcing) The problem was they never learned how to deal w/ anger, make peace.

- How many people **jump from church to church** b/c have relationship problems? Someone made them mad so they go to another church until someone offends them there (2yrs later) then they show up exited for this new church, until (few years later) the pastor says something that makes them mad or some gossips about them and they leave to find another church.

Q) What's the real problem? --- (NOT the churches they kept leaving) The problem was they never learned how to deal w/ anger, make peace & reconcile relationships.

Basically what we're talking about is **Friendship**, Real friendship is saying, "*I care about you and this relationship too much to allow this issue to mess it up. We're going to try to work this out.*"

---Now, here's the danger in what I'm saying... There are some of us here who if we're upset about something, and grab ahold of this commitment to try to work it out and NOT let it go unresolved, we run the real risk of letting our anger make things even worse, thinking "*I'm making peace, but really we're just determined to win the argument and show them they're wrong and need to change*" –I know this can happen b/c I've done this more than once, so here's the passage that's helpful for ALL of us when you're coming to someone to try to make peace & reconcile. ----Go back to the beginning of (Eph 4) this is the larger context...

- When you pick up the phone to call that person, or pull them aside to talk
- What does that conversation look like when I'm trying to talk to someone I'm angry w/ or have been hurt by?

Look at these 4 things (**Eph 4:2**) "*with all humility, and gentleness, with patients, bearing w/ one another in love*"

Listen... I don't care what you have to say to me, even if I'm mad about something, if you come to me like that, with...

- **humility** ----(putting my needs and interests above your own)
- **gentle** --- (being super careful & respectful in how your speaking to me)
- **patient** (really seeking to understand my side of the issue, NOT pressuring me, doing a lot of listening)

James 1:19 "*my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to become angry*"

- **bearing with me in love** (really trying to believe the best about me, and even overlooking much of my sin & failures)

---I mean... If that's the tone & flavor of our conversation, if someone comes to me like that. You don't think that doesn't deflate the situation and calm down the anger?

Q) What am I saying? ---It's NOT enough to say, "*I'm committed to dealing with our problems, I'm committed to peacemaking*" b/c you can say that and still come to that person in arrogance & accusations, and (at that point) you aren't making peace, your making war (even as you think your making peace) ...so...

- 1) **Step 1** is asking myself, "*Do I even need to talk to this person?*"
 - (Prov 19:11) "*it's our glory to overlook a transgression*" sometimes we just need to overlook sin
 - (1 Peter 4:8) other times we just need to "*cover the offense with love*" –we don't always need to confront, many times, its better to just overlook it and cover it with love. ---BUT...
- 2) **Step 2** is (if I do need to talk to them) saying, "*I'm NOT going to ignore problems, I'm NOT going to avoid them, We're going to be quick to get the issues on the table & seek peace*" ----(that's step 1)
- 3) **Step 3** is saying, "*I'm coming to the table humbly, with very gentle words, my tone's going to be kind & respectful, I'm really trying to understand their side, really trying to put myself in their shoes and understand this from their side, I'm going to do a lot of listening, a lot of praying, NO accusing, but giving a lot of grace.*"

I can tell this... someone who NOT only commits to make peace, but to do with humility & gentleness

- That person's going to have some really solid **friendships**
- That person's **marriage** is going to be super healthy and happy --- (if not at first, it will be soon)
- That **church** that commits to relate to each other like this... it's gonna be a **super-healthy church**

Q) Where can you find a group of people in the world "*humility, gentleness, w/ patients, bearing with one another in love*"? ---this is so desirable, everyone wants to experience a church like this, and be a part of a church like this... **Ray Orlund** has this motto I really like, something about how a healthy church is made of **Gospel + safety + time** ---that's what we're talking about in (Eph 4)

- We need a lot of gospel, (a lot of good news, a lot of reminders about the finished work of Christ)
- We need a lot of safety, (we need a safe place for people like us who are still pretty mess up by sin. I don't need to get kicked again when we're down. We need a church that "*gentle with me, bears with us in love*" NOT a place that's *quick to judge*, but *quick to give grace*, a place we can feel free to be honest about how hard this life is) we need that type of **safety**.
- We need a lot of time. (Why a lot of time, a lot of patience. Urgency yes, hurry no. We need to give each other time b/c Sanctification and growth in holiness is slow, painfully slow.)

Ray Orlund said, "*This is what our churches must become: gentle environments of gospel + safety + time. It's where we're finally free to grow in holiness*" ----So...

- God is calling us to be a people who don't avoid conflict, (we don't like conflict) but we don't avoid it
- God is calling us to be NOT ignore or treat lightly relationship problems, but to actively seek peace

Ex: I was talking to someone in the church about **conflict resolution** earlier this week and they said, "*Having conflicts to resolve means we're a family that loves each other.*" Every family has conflicts

- **Unhealthy families** *ignore them* and just try act like they aren't there.
- **Healthy families** *work through conflict* and pursue peace, saying, "*we love each other, we're going to work this out, we'll be patient, prayerful, loving, gracious, but peace needs to happen.*"

Conflict is inevitable. We will have disagreements.

- The best marriages are not the **marriages** that never fight or disagree, but the ones who learn to disagree and God honoring ways. Who commit to stay together and patiently and respectfully talk through issues until they can reach peace.
- The same is true in the **local church**. We will not see eye to eye on every issue –that's fine. But we must strive for unity (or as it says in Eph 4) "*strive to maintain the unity of the faith in the (what?) bond of peace*"

Conclusion... We'll end there today, and come back next week to talk about...

1. How to put away **sinful anger**
2. How to **use our anger for good**

But I'll tell y'all... this hit me really hard this week. **(Last night) Priscila's** getting the kids to bed and I'm in my office confessing my anger toward some I realized I had been angry at for a long time, it actually had turned into bitterness and I didn't even realize it until Friday when I sat down to work on this sermon. I didn't even see it, but when I did...

- 1) **I confessed it to the Lord** (b/c its 1st a sin against Him)
- 2) **I sought** out those I was angry with and confessed it to them and asked for forgiveness.

Some of you need to do that... if the Lord really has made clear to you **confess to Him** your sin of anger, and if you need to seek out someone you've just realized you're angry at... do that.

***As you come to this table, come remembering... **God made peace with us by sending His own Son** (His body & blood) are a continual reminder that God has made peace with his enemies, and his anger toward us was taken out on His Son, so that his anger toward us is gone, and we are at perfect peace if we have His Son.