

Sinful Anger, Part 1

***Anger is** “the rising up of the heart in passionate displeasure against a perceived evil which threatens to rob or hinder us of some desired good” (Baxter 1.284). Thus, anger is not inherently sinful.

*In fact, *anger is given to us by God for good*, to stir us up to a vigorous resistance to those things which oppose His glory or our salvation, or our own or our neighbor’s real good, cf. Zech 10.3; Mk 3.5

*Paul’s directive to the church in Eph 4.26 assumes there’s a good place for righteous anger.

*Thus, *anger is good when* it’s used for its appointed ends in a right manner and measure.

*But *sinful anger is always to be put off* and never given a place in the heart and life of God’s people, Gal 5.19-21; Eph 4.31; Col 3.8

*Anger: Job 5.2; Ps 37.8; Pr 11.17; 14.16-17, 29; 15.18; 16.32; 19.19; 22.24; 24.17-18; 25.28; 26.21; 27.4; 29.22; Ecc 7.9; Eph 4.31

I. So *when* is anger sinful? Anger is sinful:

- A. when it opposes God or good; as when a person gets angry with us because we seek to win them to the Lord or separate them from their sins.
- B. when it disturbs our reason and hinders us from thinking rightly.
- C. when it causes us to act as we should not, so that we give way to sinful words or actions.
- D. when it causes us to wrong another by our words and deeds, or to treat others in a way we would not like to be treated.
- E. when it is mistaken, having no just cause.
- F. when it is greater in measure than the provocation warrants.
- G. when it makes us unfit to do our duty to God or man.
- H. when it hinders love, brotherly kindness, and the good we might do for others.
- I. when it encourages malice, revenge, contentions, division, oppression of those under us, and dishonor to those over us.
- J. when it lasts too long and does not cease when it has accomplished its purpose.
- K. when it is used as a means to further our selfish, carnal, and sinful ends. When we are angry because our pride, profit, enjoyment, or fleshly will is crossed.

II. Considerations to hinder sinful anger

- A. Remember that uncontrolled anger injures humanity and rebels against reason. All our passions should be obedient to right reason. It’s the misery of madness and the shame of drunkenness and drugging that it dethrones our reason and sets our passions loose on others. And what is sinful anger but a short madness or drunkenness. Remember that you are a creature made in the image of God and ought not to never act unreasonably like an infuriated beast. Can a man ever justify acting like an animal?
- B. God intends our informed reason to govern our passions, but sinful anger silences our reason so that we’re in no fit state to obey God’s will. How do you expect to honor God in any state if you allow your anger to rob you of your reason?
- C. Sinful anger is a pain and sickness of the mind. And would you cherish such a disease?
- D. See what an enemy anger is to your body. It boils the blood, breeds bitterness in the heart, consumes the strength, and casts many into an indisposed condition—if not a terrible sickness. And do you enjoy a condition so much like death?
- E. See how unlovely and displeasing you are to those who observe you. Anger deforms the countenance and takes away the sweet appearance of a calm spirit. If you were always like this, who would be able to love you? Would they not avoid you as they would a wild man? Would you want your picture taken and framed when you’re like that? And can you love that which makes you so unlovely to others?

- F. You should shun this anger because it hurts others and is an enemy to love and the good of others. Everytime you're angry you're inclined to hurt those who angered you and anyone else in the path of your fury. Anger puts hurtful thoughts in your mind and hurtful words in your mouth and entices you to strike out or do something rash. Nobody loves a hurtful person. And can you give such a passion a home in your heart?
- G. Take note of the tendency of your anger. You'll find that if it's not stopped early, it'll lead to the utter ruin of your brother, bloodshed, and damnation. How many millions has anger murdered or ruined! Can you love a passion that leaves such carnage in its wake?
- H. Consider how many other sins stem from sinful anger. It so easily gives way to cursing, injury, thievery, murder, oppression, hatred, rebellion, and countless more evils. It ruins families, cities, and states. It causes wars and fills the world with blood. It causes parents to kill their children and children to dishonor their parents. It divides churches and tears marriages apart. There's no end to the evils it carries in its train. And will you be the conductor of that engine which brings with it such destruction?
- I. Anger is a sin that doesn't leave you to sin alone. It's two to one that when you're angry, you'll make others angry too. Your fire will kindle a fire in them—a fire you can't put out. It'll stir up their anger and God knows what sins they may then be drawn into. Anger is the devil's bellows to set lives and families and churches aflame. And do you want to be responsible for other men's evils as well as your own?
- J. Notice how unfit it makes you for holy duties such as prayer, meditation, and communion with God. And can any gracious soul welcome that which makes it unfit to speak with God?
- K. It's a great dishonor to the grace of God that any servant of His should have so little self control. Anger in a Christian causes the world to wonder why divine grace is no match for man's passion. Can any of us be content to dishonor the Spirit of self control by giving way to the sin of anger?
- L. It's a sin against our own conscience. The realization that we must repent afterwards should make us seek to avoid that which causes so much pain and sorrow. Why would we put our hand to that plow, when we know that we'll have to fill that row back in later with the tears of repentance and the shamed face of those who knew better, could do better, and professed to do differently?

III. Objections:

- A. I'm a naturally angry person. That may be your disposition, but that's no justification for sinful anger. You will need to be more watchful than others.
- B. But the provocation was so great that no one can blame me. It's your own sinfulness that makes you think anything can be so great as to allow you to break the laws of God. That which you call great would be small to a prepared heart. And if it was great, has not God given you greater cause to obey than man has to sin?
- C. But it happened so fast that I had no time to prevent it. Your reason should be as ready to rule as your passion is to rebel. Stop your passion immediately and take time for thought.
- D. I'm only angry for a short time and I'm sorry for it afterwards. But if it's sinful, then even if it's short, it should be avoided. And why breed your own sorrow?
- E. Everyone is angry sometimes. The sin is never the better just because many commit it. And if you pay attention, surely there are also many others who exercise self-control and who would be a better crowd for you to seek to be a part of.
- F. Paul says don't let the sun go down on your anger and my anger is done before sunset. Paul wasn't saying anger is sinful only when it continues long. Sinful anger is always sinful and is never to be entertained.

IV. Practical directions against sinful anger