The background of the entire page is a photograph of a person standing on a dark silhouette of a hill or ridge. The person is facing away from the camera, looking towards a bright sunset on the left side of the frame. The sky is a deep blue with wispy white clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a lens flare effect.

OVERCOMING SINFUL ANGER

Don't let the sun go down on your wrath

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

Anger can be one of the most intense, destructive, and unhealthy emotions that we can experience.

Anger may be caused by pressures of work, family or even from being the innocent victim of another's wrongdoing. Left unresolved, anger creates an intense desire to destroy something.

In the Bible you will find answers as to what causes anger.

You will see examples of good (righteous) and bad (unrighteous) anger and how we should deal with it as Christians.

Our earnest prayer should be that God changes our heart as we allow Him to mold us into a vessel fit

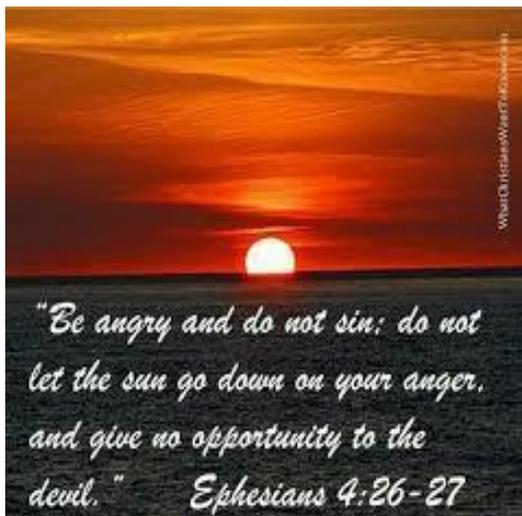
(Christian quote)

“Is all anger sin? No, but some of it is. Even God Himself has righteous anger against sin, injustice, rebellion and pettiness.

Anger sometimes serves a useful purpose, so it isn't necessarily always a sin. Obviously, we're going to have adverse feelings, or God wouldn't have needed to provide the fruit of self-control. Just being tempted to do something is not sin.

When you don't resist the temptation, but do refrain, than it becomes sin.”

Chapter 1



Righteous Anger

Psalms 7:11

God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

The Lord was angry with Solomon

1 Kings 11:9, 10

And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.

Solomon didn't turn away from God all at once or in a brief moment. His spiritual coldness started with a minor departure from God's laws (1 Kings 3:1). Over the years, that little sin grew until it resulted in Solomon's downfall. A little sin can be the first step in turning away from God.

It is not the sins we don't know about, but the sins we excuse, that cause us the greatest trouble. We must never let any sin go unchallenged. In your life, is an unchallenged sin spreading like a deadly cancer? Don't excuse it. Confess this sin to God and ask him for strength to resist temptation.

The Lord was very angry with Israel

2 Kings 17:18

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.

The Lord judged the people of Israel because they copied the evil customs of the surrounding nations, worshiping false gods, accommodating pagan customs, and following their own desires. It is not safe to create your own religion because people who do tend to live selfishly.

And to live for yourself, as Israel learned, brings serious consequences from God. Sometimes it is difficult and painful to follow God, but consider the alternative.

You can live for God or die for yourself. Determine to be God's person and do what he says regardless of the cost. What God thinks of you is infinitely more important than what those around you think. (See Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17.)

Ruin came upon Israel for both their public sins and their secret sins. Not only did they condone wickedness and idolatry in public, but they committed even worse sins in private. Secret sins are the ones we don't want others to know about because they are embarrassing or incriminating.

Sins done in private are not secret to God, and secret defiance of him is just as damaging as open rebellion.

The people took on the characteristics of the idols and imitated the godless nations around them. Israel had forgotten the importance and benefits of obeying God's word.

The king and the people were mired in wickedness. Time and again God had sent prophets to warn them of how far they had turned away from him and to call them to turn back.

God's patience and mercy are beyond our ability to understand. He will pursue us until we either respond to him or, by our own choice and hardness of heart, make ourselves unreachable. Then God's judgment is swift and sure. The only safe course is to turn to God before our stubbornness puts us out of his reach.

The "starry hosts" refers to the Canaanite practice of worshiping the sun, moon, and constellations. These were Assyrian gods that were being added to their religion. (See also 2 Kings 21:1-6; 2 Kings 23:4-5.)

Divination means witchcraft, and sorcery is consulting evil spirits. Forms of witchcraft, fortune telling, and black magic were forbidden by God (Deut. 18:9-14).

They were wrong because they sought power and guidance totally apart from God, his law, and his Word. Isaiah echoed this law and prophesied of the complete destruction these occult practices would bring to those who participated in them (Isaiah 8:19-22).

Jesus looked around them with anger.

Mark 3:4, 5

And he [Jesus] said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Jesus was angry about the Pharisees’ uncaring attitudes. Anger itself is not wrong. It depends on what makes us angry and what we do with our anger. Too often we express our anger in selfish and harmful ways. By contrast, Jesus expressed his anger by correcting a problem—healing the man’s hand. Use your anger to find constructive solutions rather than to tear people down.

Jesus was angry at the money changers

John 2:13-16

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

Chapter 2



Results of Unrighteous Anger

Genesis 4:5-8

But for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?"

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Refrain from anger

Psalms 37:8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.

Anger and worry (fretting) are two very destructive emotions. They reveal a lack of faith that God loves us and is in control. We should not worry; instead, we should trust in God, giving ourselves to him for his use and safekeeping.

When you dwell on your problems, you will become anxious and angry. But if you concentrate on God and his goodness, you will find peace. Where do you focus your attention?

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife.

Proverbs 15:18

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

The “path of the upright” doesn’t always seem easy (Proverbs 15:19), but look at the alternatives. Hatred (Proverbs 15:17), dissension (Proverbs 15:18), and laziness (Proverbs 15:19) cause problems that the upright person does not have to face.

By comparison, his or her life is a smooth, level road because it is built on a solid foundation of love for God.

A man of wrath stirs up strife.

Proverbs 29:22

A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.

Fear of people can hamper everything you try to do. In extreme forms, it can make you afraid to leave your home. By contrast, fear of God—respect, reverence, and trust—is liberating. Why fear people who can do no eternal harm? Instead, fear God who can turn the harm intended by others into good for those who trust him.

Chapter 3



Key to Overcoming Anger

He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly

Proverbs 14:16, 17

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

The “way that seems right” may offer many options and require few sacrifices. Easy choices, however, should make us take a second look.

Is this solution attractive because it allows me to be lazy?

Because it doesn't ask me to change my life-style?

Because it requires no moral restraints? The right choice often requires hard work and self-sacrifice. Don't be enticed by apparent shortcuts that seem right but end in death.

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding

Proverbs 14:29

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

A quick temper can be like a fire out of control. It can burn us and everyone else in its path. Anger divides people. It pushes us into hasty decisions that only cause bitterness and guilt. Yet anger, in itself, is not wrong.

Anger can be a legitimate reaction to injustice and sin. When you feel yourself getting angry, look for the cause. Are you reacting to an evil situation that you are going to set right? Or are you responding selfishly to a personal insult?

Pray that God will help you control your quick temper, channeling your feelings into effective action and conquering selfish anger through humility and repentance.

Good sense makes one slow to anger.

Proverbs 19:11

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Are you a mocker or a wise person? You can tell by the way you respond to criticism.

Instead of tossing back a quick put-down or clever retort when rebuked, listen to what is being said. Learn from your critics; this is the path to wisdom.

Wisdom begins with knowing God. He gives insight into living because he created life. To know God is not just to know the facts about him, but to stand in awe of him and have a relationship with him.

Do you really want to be wise? Get to know God better and better. (See James 1:5, 2 Peter 1:2-4 for more on how to become wise.)

Be not quick in your spirit to become angry.

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

To finish what we start takes hard work, wise guidance, self-discipline, and patience. Anyone with vision can start a big project. But vision without wisdom often results in unfinished projects and goals.

Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

James 1:19, 20

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

When we talk too much and listen too little, we communicate to others that we think our ideas are much more important than theirs.

James wisely advises us to reverse this process. Put a mental stopwatch on your conversations and keep track of how much you talk and how much you listen.

When people talk with you, do they feel that their viewpoints and ideas have value?

These verses speak of anger that erupts when our egos are bruised—“*I am hurt;*” “*My opinions are not being heard.*” When injustice and sin occur, we *should* become angry because others are being hurt.

But we should not become angry when we fail to win an argument or when we feel offended or neglected. Selfish anger never helps anybody.

Chapter 4



Put On Forgiveness and Loving Kindness

Matthew 5:21-24

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that 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.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift...” (Jesus’ words)

When Jesus said, “But I tell you,” he was not doing away with the law or adding his own beliefs. Rather, he was giving a fuller understanding of why God made that law in the first place.

For example, Moses said, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13); Jesus taught that we should not even become angry enough to murder, for then we have already committed murder in our heart. The Pharisees read this law and, not having literally murdered anyone, felt righteous.

Yet they were angry enough with Jesus that they would soon plot his death, though they would not do the dirty work themselves.

We miss the intent of God's Word when we read his rules for living without trying to understand why he made them. When do you keep God's rules but close your eyes to his intent?

Killing is a terrible sin, but *anger* is a great sin too because it also violates God's command to love. Anger in this case refers to a seething, brooding bitterness against someone.

It is a dangerous emotion that always threatens to leap out of control, leading to violence, emotional hurt, increased mental stress, and spiritual damage. Anger keeps us from developing a spirit pleasing to God.

Have you ever been proud that you didn't strike out and say what was really on your mind? Self-control is good, but Christ wants us to practice thought-control as well. Jesus said that we will be held accountable even for our attitudes.

Broken relationships can hinder our relationship with God. If we have a problem or grievance with a friend, we should resolve the problem as soon as possible. We are hypocrites if we claim to love God while we hate others. Our attitudes toward others reflect our relationship with God (1 John 4:20).

The works of the flesh are evident.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger,

rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

We all have evil desires, and we can't ignore them. In order for us to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, we must deal with them decisively (crucify them— Galatians 5:24).

These desires include obvious sins such as sexual immorality and witchcraft. They also include less obvious sins such as selfish ambition, hatred, and jealousy. Those who ignore such sins or refuse to deal with them reveal that they have not received the gift of the Spirit that leads to a transformed life.

Crucify the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ.

They are the by-products of Christ's control—we can't obtain them by *trying* to get them without his help. If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, we must join our lives to his (see John 15:4-5).

We must know him, love him, remember him, and imitate him. As a result, we will fulfill the intended purpose of the law—to love God and our neighbors. Which of these qualities do you want the Spirit to produce in you?

Because the God who sent the law also sent the Spirit, the by-products of the Spirit-filled life are in perfect harmony with the intent of God's law. A person who exhibits the fruit of the Spirit fulfills the law far better than a person who observes the rituals but has little love in his or her heart.

In order to accept Christ as Savior, we need to turn from our sins and willingly nail our sinful nature to the cross. This doesn't mean, however, that we will never see traces of its evil desires again.

As Christians we still have the capacity to sin, but we have been set free from sin's power over us and no longer have to give in to it. We must daily commit our sinful tendencies to God's control, daily crucify them, and moment by moment draw on the Spirit's power to overcome them (see Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14).

God is interested in every part of our lives, not just the spiritual part. As we live by the Holy Spirit's power, we need to submit every aspect of our lives to God—emotional, physical, social, intellectual, vocational. Paul says that because we're saved, we should live like it! The Holy Spirit is the source of your new life, so keep in step with his leading. Don't let anything or anyone else determine your values and standards in any area of your life.

Be angry and do not sin

Ephesians 4:26-28

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

The Bible doesn't tell us that we shouldn't feel angry, but it points out that it is important to handle our anger properly. If vented thoughtlessly, anger can hurt others and destroy relationships. If bottled up inside, it can cause us to become bitter and destroy us from within. Paul tells us to deal with our anger immediately in a way that builds relationships rather than destroys them.

If we nurse our anger, we will give Satan an opportunity to divide us. Are you angry with someone right now? What can you do to resolve your differences? Don't let the day end before you begin to work on mending your relationship.

We can grieve the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Paul warns us against unwholesome language, bitterness, improper use of anger, brawling, slander, and bad attitudes toward others. Instead of acting that way, we should be forgiving, just as God has forgiven us.

Are you grieving or pleasing God with your attitudes and actions? Act in love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as God acted in love by sending his Son to die for your sins.

Put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk

Colossians 3:8, 12-13

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

We must rid ourselves of all evil practices and immorality. Then we can commit ourselves to what Christ teaches. Paul was appealing to the commitment the believers had made and urging them to remain true to their confession of faith. They were to rid themselves of the old life and "put on" the new way of living given by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. If you have made such a commitment to Christ, are you remaining true to it?

Paul offers a strategy to help us live for God day by day:

- (1) Imitate Christ's compassionate, forgiving attitude (Col. 3:12-13);
- (2) Let love guide your life (Col. 3:14);
- (3) Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart (Col. 3:15);
- (4) Always be thankful (Col. 3:15);
- (5) Keep God's Word in you at all times (Col. 3:16);
- (6) Live as Jesus Christ's representative (Col. 3:17).

Chapter 5



Ecclesiastes 7:9 “Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.”

Examples of anger

Cain became very angry

Genesis 4:5

But for Cain and for his offering He had no regard so Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

The Bible does not say why God rejected Cain’s sacrifice. Perhaps Cain’s attitude was improper, or perhaps his offering was not up to God’s standards.

Proverbs 21:27 says, “The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable—how much more so when brought with evil intent!” God evaluates both our motives and the quality of what we offer him.

When we give to God and others, we should have a joyful heart because of what we are able to give. We should not worry about how much we are giving up, for all things are God’s in the first place. Instead, we should joyfully give to God our best in time, money, possessions, and talents.

Allow your brother's anger to subside.

Genesis 27:45

Until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

When Esau lost the valuable family blessing, his future suddenly changed. Reacting in anger, he decided to kill Jacob. When you lose something of great value, or if others conspire against you and succeed, anger is the first and most natural reaction. But you can control your feelings by

- (1) Recognizing your reaction for what it is,
- (2) Praying for strength, and
- (3) Asking God for help to see the opportunities that even your bad situation may provide.

Because of their anger, they slew men.

Genesis 49:5-7

"Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are implements of violence." Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; because in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they lamed oxen.

"Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

The oldest son was supposed to receive a double inheritance, but Reuben lost his special honor. Unstable and untrustworthy, especially in his younger days, he had gone so far as to sleep with one of his father's concubines. Jacob could not give the birthright blessing to such a dishonorable son.

Moses was angry at complaining Israel

Numbers 10:10

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?"

The two silver trumpets were used to coordinate the tribes as they moved through the desert. To keep so many people in tight formations required clear communication and control. Trumpet blasts also reminded Israel of God's protection over them.

Balaam was angry at his donkey

Numbers 22:27

When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick.

Donkeys were all-purpose vehicles used for transportation, carrying loads, grinding grain, and plowing fields. They were usually highly dependable, which explains why Balaam became so angry when his donkey refused to move.

Saul's anger burned against Jonathan.

1 Samuel 20:30

Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"

Saul was still trying to secure his throne for future generations even though he had already been told his dynasty would end with him (1 Samuel 13:13-14). Even worse, he was trying to do this by sinful human means, because he knew he would get no help from God.

Jonathan could have made a move to become the next king by killing his rival, but he bypassed this opportunity because of his love for both God and David (1 Samuel 23:16-18).

Ahab was sullen and vexed

1 Kings 21:4

So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food.

After hearing God's judgment (1 Kings 20:42), Ahab went home to pout. Driven by anger and rebellion against God, he had a fit of rage when Naboth refused to sell his vineyard.

The same feelings that led him to a career of power grabbing drove him to resent Naboth. Rage turned to hatred and led to murder. Naboth, however, wanted to uphold God's laws: it was considered a duty to keep ancestral land in the family.

This incident shows the cruel interplay between Ahab and Jezebel, two of the most wicked leaders in Israel's history.

Naaman was furious

2 Kings 5:11

But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.'

Naaman, a great hero, was used to getting respect, and he was outraged when Elisha treated him like an ordinary person.

A proud man, he expected royal treatment. To wash in a great river would be one thing, but the Jordan was small and dirty. To wash in the Jordan, Naaman thought, was beneath a man of his position.

But Naaman had to humble himself and obey Elisha's commands in order to be healed.

Obedience to God begins with humility. We must believe that his way is better than our own. We may not always understand his ways of working, but by humbly obeying, we will receive his blessings. We must remember that

- (1) God's ways are best;
- (2) God wants our obedience more than anything else;
- (3) God can use anything to accomplish his purposes.

Naaman left in a rage because the cure for his disease seemed too simple. He was a hero, and he expected a heroic cure. Full of pride and self-will, he could not accept the simple cure of faith.

Sometimes people react to God's offer of forgiveness in the same way. Just to *believe* in Jesus Christ somehow doesn't seem significant enough to bring eternal life.

To obey God's commands doesn't seem heroic. What Naaman had to do to have his leprosy washed away is similar to what we must do to have our sin washed away—humbly accept God's mercy.

Don't let your reaction to the way of faith keep you from the cure you need the most.

Asa was angry with the seer.

2 Chronicles 16:10

Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.

Judah and Israel never learned! Although God had delivered them even when they were outnumbered (2 Chron. 13:3ff; 2 Chron. 14:9ff), they repeatedly sought help from pagan nations rather than from God.

That Asa sought help from Aram was evidence of national spiritual decline. With help from God alone, Asa had defeated the Cushites in open battle. But his confidence in God had slipped, and now he sought only a human solution to his problem.

When confronted by the prophet Hanani, Asa threw him in prison, revealing the true condition of his heart.

It is not sin to use human means to solve our problems, but it is sin to trust them more than God, to think they are better than God's ways, or to leave God completely out of the problem-solving process.

Uzziah was enraged.

2 Chronicles 26:19

But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense.

When people have power, they often think they can live above the law. But even rulers are subject to God, as Uzziah discovered. No matter what your position in society, God expects you to honor, worship, and obey him.

For much of his life, Uzziah “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Chron. 26:4). But Uzziah turned away from God, and he was struck with leprosy and remained leprous until his death.

He is remembered more for his arrogant act and subsequent punishment than for his great reforms. God requires lifelong obedience. Spurts of obedience are not enough. Only “he who stands firm to the end” will be rewarded (Mark 13:13). Be remembered for your consistent faith; otherwise you, too, may become more famous for your downfall than for your success.

Haman was filled with rage.

Esther 3:5

When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage.

Why did Haman want to destroy all Jews just because of one man’s action?

- (1) Haman was an Agagite (Esther 3:1), a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:20). The Amalekites were ancient enemies of the Israelites (see Exodus 17:16; Deut. 25:17-19). Haman’s hatred was directed not just at Mordecai, but at all the Jews.
- (2) As second-in-command in the Persian empire (Esther 3:1), Haman loved his power and authority and the reverence shown him.

The Jews, however, looked to God as their final authority, not to any man. Haman realized that the only way to fulfill his self-centered desires was to kill all those who disregarded his authority. His quest for personal power and his hatred of the Jewish race consumed him.

Haman enjoyed the power and prestige of his position, and he was enraged when Mordecai did not respond with the expected reverential bow.

Haman's anger was not directed just toward Mordecai, but toward what Mordecai stood for—the Jews' dedication to God as the only authority worthy of reverence.

Haman's attitude was prejudiced: he hated a group of people because of a difference in belief or culture.

Prejudice grows out of personal pride—considering oneself better than others. In the end, Haman was punished for his arrogant attitude (Esther 7:9-10).

God will harshly judge those who are prejudiced or whose pride causes them to look down on others.

Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders.

Daniel 3:13

Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

We don't know if other Jews refused to fall down and worship the image, but these three were singled out as public examples. Why didn't the three men just bow to the image and tell God that they didn't mean it? They had determined never to worship another god, and they courageously took their stand.

As a result, they were condemned and led away to be executed. The men did not know whether they would be delivered from the fire; all they knew was that they would not fall down and worship an idol.

Are you ready to take a stand for God no matter what? When you stand for God, you will stand out. It may be painful, and it may not always have a happy ending. Be prepared to say, "If he rescues me, or if he doesn't, I will serve only God."

Nebuchadnezzar had lost control. How could anyone dare to disobey his commands? As the supreme ruler of Babylonia, he expected absolute obedience. But his pride had caused him to go beyond his own authority. His demands were unjust and his reactions extreme. If you find yourself angered when people don't follow your directions, ask yourself, "Why am I reacting?" Your ego may be overly involved with your authority.

Jonah was angry.

Jonah 4:4

The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

Jonah had run from the job of delivering God's message of destruction to Nineveh (Jonah 1:2-3); then he wanted to die because the destruction wouldn't happen.

How quickly Jonah had forgotten God's mercy for him when he was in the fish (Jonah 2:9-10). Jonah was happy when God saved him, but angry when Nineveh was saved.

But Jonah was learning a valuable lesson about God's mercy and forgiveness. God's forgiveness was not only for Jonah or for Israel alone; it extends to all who repent and believe.

Jonah may have been more concerned about his own reputation than God's. He knew that if the people repented, none of his warnings to Nineveh would come true. This would embarrass him, although it would give glory to God. Are you more interested in getting glory for God or for yourself?

God ministered tenderly to Jonah just as he had done to Nineveh and to Israel, and just as he does to us. God could have destroyed Jonah for his defiant anger, but instead he gently taught him a lesson. If we will obey God's will, he will lead us. His harsh judgment is reserved for those who persist in rebellion.

Jonah was angry at the withering of the vine, but not over what could have happened to Nineveh. Most of us have cried at the death of a pet or when an object with sentimental value is broken, but have we cried over the fact that a friend does not know God?

How easy it is to be more sensitive to our own interests than to the spiritual needs of people around us.

Sometimes people wish that judgment and destruction would come upon sinful people whose wickedness seems to demand immediate punishment. But God is more merciful than we can imagine.

God feels compassion for the sinners we want judged, and he devises plans to bring them to himself. What is your attitude toward those who are especially wicked? Do you want them destroyed? Or do you wish that they could experience God's mercy and forgiveness?

God spared the sailors when they pleaded for mercy. God saved Jonah when he prayed from inside the fish. God saved the people of Nineveh when they responded to Jonah's preaching.

God answers the prayers of those who call upon him. God will always work his will, and he desires that all come to him, trust in him, and be saved.

We can be saved if we heed God's warnings to us through his Word. If we respond in obedience, God will be gracious, and we will receive his mercy, not his punishment.

The people in the synagogue were filled with rage.

Luke 4:28

And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;

Jesus' remarks filled the people of Nazareth with rage because he was saying that God sometimes chose to reach Gentiles rather than Jews. Jesus implied that his hearers were as unbelieving as the citizens of the northern kingdom of Israel in the days of Elijah and Elisha, a time notorious for its great wickedness.

The high priest was filled with jealousy

Acts 5:17

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.

The religious leaders were jealous—Peter and the apostles were already commanding more respect than they had ever received.

The difference, however, was that the religious leaders demanded respect and reverence for themselves; the apostles' goal was to bring respect and reverence to God. The apostles were respected not because they demanded it, but because they deserved it.

The apostles experienced power to do miracles, great boldness in preaching, and God's presence in their lives, yet they were not free from hatred and persecution.

They were arrested, put in jail, beaten, and slandered by community leaders. Faith in God does not make troubles disappear; it makes troubles appear less frightening because it puts them in the right perspective.

Don't expect everyone to react favorably when you share something as dynamic as your faith in Christ. Some will be jealous, afraid, or threatened.

Expect some negative reactions, and remember that you must be more concerned about serving God than about the reactions of people (see Acts 5:29).

They were cut to the quick.

Acts 7:54

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.

Stephen saw the glory of God, and Jesus the Messiah standing at God's right hand. Stephen's words are similar to Jesus' words spoken before the council (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69).

Stephen's vision supported Jesus' claim and angered the Jewish leaders who had condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy.

They would not tolerate Stephen's words, so they dragged him out and killed him. People may not kill us for witnessing about Christ, but they will let us know they don't want to hear the truth and will often try to silence us.

Keep honoring God in your conduct and words; though many may turn against you and your message, some will follow Christ.

Remember, Stephen's death made a profound impact on Paul, who later became the world's greatest missionary. Even those who oppose you now may later turn to Christ.

Christian Quotes Concerning Anger

“Anger and bitterness are two noticeable signs of being focused on self and not trusting God's sovereignty in your life.

When you believe that God causes all things to work together for good to those who belong to Him and love Him, you can respond to trials with joy instead of anger or bitterness.” ~ John C. Boger

“Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.” ~ Thomas A' Kempis

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation. Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print