

March 8, 2009

**THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS: ANGER**  
**GEN 4.1-8; MARK 3.1-6; JAMES 1.19-21**

**1. THE CHARACTER OF ANGER**

**A. RIGHTEOUS ANGER: THE VIRTUOUS HOST**

The parasitic nature of sin. Sin feeds off of righteousness and twists, distorts, and perverts.

E.g., Pride is a perversion of proper self-worth; realizing you have been created in the image of God; boasting in Christ. Envy inverts God-imagining jealousy; i.e., instead of guarding what rightfully belongs to me, I am focused on what rightfully belongs to others, want it for myself, and want to deprive them of it.

Anger is a perversion of love. Context tells you if it is righteous or unrighteous.

God is angry (cf. e.g., Ps 7.11). Jesus is angry with the Pharisees in Mk 3.

What is anger and how does it work? Anger is the outworking of love. We become angry when that which we love becomes threatened. It is not pitted against love by the expression of it.

God is angry when his creation, which he loves, is threatened by sin's distortion and death. Because of this he is angry with sin and sinners who seek to destroy it. We, in the same way, can be angry and sin not (cf. Psa 4.4//Eph 4.26)

Sometimes *not* being angry is a sin. John Chrysostom: "He who is not angry when he has cause to be, sins. For unreasonable patience is the hotbed of many vices."

*Righteous anger is angry for the right reasons.* Jesus was angry *because* he loved his Father, the Law, and the people, not because he was absorbed with his own sense of self-importance. Righteous anger, like righteous jealousy, guards zealously that which is right, and it does so passionately.

*Righteous anger has the right goal.* Righteous anger is directed the right way. It is ultimately constructive and life-giving. Jesus heals the man—gives life—in anger.

The church today could stand to be a bit more angry.

You must know that as images of God we will experience anger. We will always have the reaction of anger to something at some time. The question is whether our anger serves the one, true, and living God or an idol.

Test for anger: If you can control your anger and direct it toward something constructive and purposeful, then it is most likely righteous. If you cannot control it and it is destructive, then you are probably entering into unrighteous anger.

**B. UNRIGHTEOUS ANGER: ITS CAUSES**

Unrighteous anger is grounded in selfish self-interest.

Gen 4 and the story of Cain. When Cain/Cain's offering was rejected by God, he "burned" (i.e., was angry) and his countenance fell (i.e., he was embarrassed).

**1. Anger is a reaction to a revealed deficiency** - The deficiency may be real or perceived. Cain's was real (cf. 1Jn 3.11-15)

Anger is *competitive*. It doesn't use competition simply to make itself better but to crush the other person. Whenever it is defeated or bettered by another person in any way, it flames up and seeks to consume.

Anger cannot handle being *corrected*. God told Cain that if he does well he will be accepted. God is giving him correction and telling him that if he does what he has been commanded, God will accept him. Cain wanted acceptance on his own terms.

Anger sees correction as belittlement not for the purpose of becoming better.

Instead of humbly receiving the correction and being improved by it, Anger rises up in defense of itself, seeking to justify itself or point out the deficiencies in others or simply abuse the other person so that they will be fearful of ever correcting it again.

Anger can see and hear things that don't exist. Henry Fairlie: "Whether with deeds or words, the wish is to harm another. But our fixation also harms us when we succumb to it. It makes us imagine slights and injuries where there are none, and to feel an undue indignation at them. When we say that someone is quick to anger, we do not mean only that he gets angry quickly, but that he gets angry at things that do not deserve such vehemence."

William Willimon: "Anger protects the status quo of the ego. Anger isolates us, keeps us from having to be affected by the world around us, from having to change."

**2. Anger is a reaction to a loss of control** - this may also be real or perceived. You have lost control over a person or circumstance.

This loss of control is realized when you have a *blocked goal*. Cain goal was to be accepted by God, but he wasn't.

Anger desires control and seeks to dominate others or the situation through its expression (temper tantrums, etc.)

Anger seems to work ... for the moment. But it causes an immense amount of damage.

### C. UNRIGHTEOUS ANGER: ITS REACTIONS

**1. The objects of Anger** - ultimately all directed toward God; Anger has a self-centered, ego-centric view of the universe and why God exists. I.e., everything exists to serve me and me alone.

Sometimes Anger is directed toward ourselves. Sometimes justified because we are still sinners and need to be angry with sin. Other times we think too highly of ourselves and reveal our impatience.

Circumstances may also be the object of our anger. We don't like the way things are falling out for us concerning our jobs, our marriages, our lack of being married, the traffic, the loss of loved ones, or such the like.

Others are also be the objects of Anger. There is a real or perceived injustice that has occurred. Someone has said something or done something, and they become the object of your ire.

**2. Expressions of unrighteous anger** - Anger seeks revenge in thought, word, and/or deed.

Thought life: We lose perspective. We become insane (i.e., "mad").

Brooding Anger is bitterness. Tests for bitterness: You might be bitter if you replay in your head again and again what the other person did to you. You might be bitter if you imagine ways you might be able to take revenge. You might be bitter if you continue to think of ways you might be able to put the person in his place.

Hatred is Anger that has come to emotional fruition. This is complete antipathy toward another.

Words: Anger uses verbal assaults that demean and seek to dominate through force; a force that can appear calm and controlled as well as wild and in a rage.

Deeds: Physical abuse and murder. E.g., Cain.

We must not let ourselves justify our Anger.

## 2. THE CURE FOR UNRIGHTEOUS ANGER

**A. GUARD YOUR FRIENDSHIPS** (Prov 22.24-25)

**B. HUMILITY** - realize that you are not center of the universe.

**C. FORGIVENESS** - Eph 4.26 "... do not let the sun go down on your wrath."

*Confession* - confess your own sin of Anger *as if the other person had not sinned at all.*

Stand ready to forgive (i.e., don't let bitterness arise in your heart) even if the person is not willing to repent. The relationship will not be reconciled, but you will not be controlled and consumed by bitterness.

When you become bitter, you are just as guilty as the other person who wronged you. You are in sin.