

# Anger—Part Three

Proverbs 22:24-25

## 1. What is the source of quarrels and conflicts? James 4:1-5

- a. Good desires/bad desires
- b. The progression of anger:  
I want it⇒I need it⇒I deserve it⇒I'm not getting it⇒I'm angry!  
I want it⇒I need it⇒You owe it to me⇒You're not giving it to me⇒I'm angry!
- c. Planting idols in the heart (vv 4-5)

## 2. Identifying our idols

- a. What kinds of things provoke you to anger?
- b. What are you wanting when you get angry?
- c. Why do you want it?
- d. What are you doing when you don't get it?

## 3. Uprooting Anger

- a. Repent (change your mind about your anger and submit)
- b. Confess
  - i. To all involved
  - ii. Without qualification
  - iii. Ask for forgiveness
  - iv. Ask for help
- c. Steps to take when tempted with anger:
  - i. Immediately ask God for help (Heb. 4:16).
  - ii. Remind yourself that God is sovereign, and He is good. He is allowing this circumstance and will give you strength to resist temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).
  - iii. Examine yourself: What are you wanting? Why do you want it? What "rights" of yours are being violated? What is your role in this situation? (Matt. 7:1-5)
  - iv. Consider what character quality God may be wanting to develop in you or what sinful belief or attitude He may be bringing to the surface. Thank Him for caring about you and for helping you (Heb. 12:6)
  - v. Preach the gospel to yourself. Remind yourself of how Christ responded to wrongs done Him and that He did this for you (Isa. 53). Remember your great sin and how much Christ has forgiven you (Matt. 18:23-35).
  - vi. Consider what opportunity this may present for you to display the gospel to others (Phil. 4:5; Col. 4:6).
  - vii. Devise a plan to seek peace or reconciliation that is godly. Seek the counsel of others who are more mature (Gal. 6:1).

## Understanding Anger in Ephesians 4:26

1. This is a quotation of Psalm 4:4 (LXX)
  - a. David is speaking to his enemies (cf. v 2).
  - b. He is obviously not commanding his enemies to be angry.
  - c. He is saying something like, “Though you are angry, don’t sin. Take time to think this through before going to sleep and calm down. Then do the right thing.”
2. “Be angry” in Eph. 4:26 is an imperative (command) followed by another imperative, “don’t sin.”
3. In Greek, an imperative (esp. when there are two connected by “and”) can be used to convey the idea of a concession
  - a. It would be translated as “**Although** you are angry” (cf. John 7:52). In other words, Paul is conceding that anger will happen (cf. 1 John 2:1 where John concedes that sin will happen).<sup>1</sup>
  - b. This is the view of most Greek reference books/grammars.
  - c. After conceding that anger is going to happen, he gives instruction to deal with it.
4. The concessive idea fits the context best. It would be difficult to understand why Paul commands believers to be angry here.
5. It agrees with v 31 (“Let all...anger...be put away”)

**This passage is an exhortation to deal swiftly with anger in a God-honoring way.**

Most who understand this to be speaking of righteous anger do so because they argue that we should take the imperative (command), “be angry,” at face value. Clearly Paul would not command sinful anger, so he must be commanding righteous anger. However, even these commentators/teachers do not really treat the imperative as a true command. In other words, as they teach this passage, they do not **command** believers to be angry. Indeed, it would be very difficult to instruct believers as to how they should obey such a command.<sup>2</sup> Instead, most holding this view end up saying that Paul’s point is more about how we deal with righteous anger when it occurs (it should be dealt with before sundown), but this is not very different from the view above.

There is another problem if Paul is commanding us to get righteously angry but then deal with it quickly. Many of the things about which believers should be righteously angry could not be resolved before sundown (e.g. abortion, sex trafficking, child abuse, spiritual abuse, etc.). Let’s be honest, most of the anger we justify with this passage is anger about something done to **us** or denied **us**. It isn’t the emotions that rise up within us when we see our holy God’s character being dishonored or when we see gross injustice begin done to the helpless. It’s the anger we feel toward our wife or husband when they do or say something that we feel indignant about and that we try to justify as ‘righteous.’ Indeed, this sinful anger should be handled quickly (before ‘sundown’).

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<sup>1</sup> Moses’ instruction to the Israelites to write a decree of divorce when a man leaves a woman is another example of concession (Matthew 19:7-8).

<sup>2</sup> Angry emotion is righteous when it is motivated by a love for God and His purposes. However, when we **act** in anger, we do not achieve the righteousness of God (James 1:20). That is, our angry actions, words, or attitudes do not please God because in our sinfulness and smallness we cannot achieve His righteous purposes in this way. We aim our angry actions at achieving justice or vindication or retribution, but the Lord says “vengeance is Mine.” Only God’s angry actions can achieve true justice because only God is pure in motive. Anger that is truly righteous will first look to God for justice and then will **act** for reconciliation, for restoration, and for peace (Ps. 34:14; Rom. 12:18; 1 Pet. 3:11).