

# DOCTRINE OF ANGER

## I. Introduction.

- A. Anger is a mental attitude sin that is quite pervasive; as such, it is mentioned in the New American Standard translation some 266 times.
- B. This does not include related concepts such as fury, indignation, or rage, which are used another 100+ times.
- C. There are at least 14 Hebrew terms used to denote anger of some kind and another 10 Greek terms as well.
- D. While anger may be one of the more unpleasant emotions, it is certainly a reality that permeates mankind and human history.
  1. Anger is an emotion that we have all experienced, and is a signal to us that something is not right.
  2. Anger is also a secondary emotion, indicating that something else was experienced first, something that triggered the anger.
- E. As we will observe, most anger is sinful and at odds with the plan of God; however, there is a type of anger that comes from proper motivation and resident doctrine that is not only appropriate, but is indicative of spiritual health.
- F. Therefore, do not fall into the trap of thinking that all anger is bad and that people should never be angry; many of us grew up with misguided notions about anger.
  1. You should never be angry.
  2. Anger leads to abandonment or rejection.
  3. Anger is dangerous.
  4. Anger should be suppressed and held inside.
- G. While anger and hatred can be closely related, this doctrine will confine itself to the discussion of anger proper.

## II. Vocabulary.

### A. Hebrew vocabulary.

1. אָפַּח ('aph), m.noun, this word literally means the nose or nostril, and deals with the emotional part of anger that effects the respiration.
2. אָנַף ('anaph), verb, to be angry.
3. קָצַף (qatsaph), verb, to be displeased or angry, to give expression to anger, wrath.
  - a. קֶטֶפַּח (qetseph), m.noun, indignation or wrath.
  - b. קָצַף (q<sup>e</sup>tsaph), 1X, Aramaic verb, fury, irrational anger. Dan. 2:12
4. זַלְאָפָּח (zal'aphah), f.noun, 3X, raging heat, burning indignation. Ps. 119:53
5. זָעַם (za'am), verb, 33X, the basic idea is experiencing or expressing intense anger or indignation, being somewhat parallel with קָצַף (qatsaph), except that the expression takes a more specific form, particularly denunciation. Num. 23:7-8
  - a. זַעַם (za'am), m.noun, indignation or anger.
6. חֶמָּה (chemah), f.noun, this term comes from a root verb that means heat, and signifies burning anger or fury. Gen. 27:44

7. חָרָה (charah), verb, to burn with anger, emphasizes the kindling or igniting of anger.
    - a. חָרוֹן (charon), m.noun, burning anger.
  8. עָבַר (abhar), verb, to be arrogant, to become angry, only used in Hithpael (the reflexive stem) and means to be arrogant and infuriate oneself.
    - a. עֲבָרָה ('ebhrah), f.noun, an excess or overflow of anger. Job 40:11
  9. רָגַז (ragaz), verb, 41X, the primary meaning of this root is to tremble or shake, from which the idea of shaking in anger is derived.
    - a. רֹגֵז (rogez), m.noun, 7X, can refer to the inner emotional agitation of anger, or the overt expression of angry quarreling.
    - b. רָגַז (r<sup>e</sup>gaz), Aramaic, both noun and verb mean to provoke to wrath or rage.
  10. קָצַר (qatser), adj., 5X, from a root meaning short, quick-tempered or easily angered.
- B. Greek vocabulary
1. ἐμμαίνομαι (emmainomai), 1X, to be enraged, to be furious with someone.
  2. θυμώω (thumoo), 1X, to be exceedingly angry, to be enraged.
    - a. θυμός (thumos), from a root that means to pant or breathe violently, often used in LXX for אָפֶה ('aph) passion, angry heat, sudden anger that arises and may quickly subside.
  3. ὀργίζω (orgizo), 8X, to make angry, to irritate or provoke, often used for a settled or perpetuated anger.
    - a. ὀργή (orge), from the verb that denotes one's natural impulse or propensity, this word often indicates indignation that has arisen more gradually and has become more settled.
    - b. ὀργίλος (orgilos), 1X, irascible, inclined to anger; quick-tempered, easily provoked.
  4. παροργίζω (parorgizo), 2X, to provoke to anger, to exasperate. Eph. 6:4
    - a. παροργισμός (parorgismos), 1X, irritation, anger, exasperation.
  5. προσοχθίζω (prosochthizo), 2X, to be vexed, upset, or angry, to be displeased to the point of loathing or disgust.
  6. χολάω (cholao), 1X, lit. to be full of bile, to be mad or angry.
    - a. χολή (chole), 2X, lit. bile or gall, bitter anger or wrath.

### III. Definition and description.

- A. Webster defines anger as a strong passion or emotion of displeasure, and usually antagonism, which is excited by a sense of injury or insult.
- B. The expression of anger may range from the barely perceptible to full-blown rage; it may be confined to the mental attitude, expressed in angry words, or given some overt expression.
- C. It may be keen, hot, and rise very quickly, or it can be a deep-seated, long-term, smoldering anger, which may lead to a desire to retaliate against the object of anger.
- D. Anger generally occurs when one regards something as an injury or injustice to himself or to others; in that regard, anger may arise out of real or perceived offenses.
- E. Sinful anger can easily become misplaced and excessive, since an angry person is very often not a rational person.

- F. The vast majority of anger, both as seen in the scriptures and as observed in life, is a product of the old sin nature. Gen. 49:6-7 (associated with self-will and cruelty); Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:31
- G. Sinful anger occurs when one is motivated by strictly personal considerations that cause him to become angry at what offends him personally; sinful anger does not arise out of doctrinal considerations, or addressing issues of wrong and right.
- H. Anger is a passion that is an unpredictable, blind, motivating power; it may prompt us to act or speak without thought of the issues at hand or without considering the consequences. Prov. 27:4
- I. As such, unabated anger is a detriment to spiritual advance in the plan of God. James 1:20
- J. However, there is an anger that is sanctified, based on the norms and standards of God and His word; we call this type of anger righteous indignation. Eph. 4:26
- K. This type of anger is aroused in the righteous believer when he observes oppression, injustice, and violation of God's righteous standards. Matt. 18:34; Mk. 3:5
- L. Differentiating between sinful anger and righteous indignation is first dependent upon the assimilation of God's norms and standards. James 1:19-21
- M. Some synonyms and associated concepts include the following:
  1. **Indignation** is a term that indicates a deep and intense anger of what one considers as mean, cruel, shameful, ignoble, unjust or unrighteous. Ps. 7:11; Jere. 50:13
  2. **Wrath and ire** express the feelings of anger from one that is bitterly provoked and focus on the overt expression of anger, the punishment or retribution that may result from anger. Ps. 21:9; Prov. 27:4
  3. **Rage** indicates a vehement, sudden expression of anger, possibly with a violent display of the outrage. Dan. 3:13; Lk. 4:28-29
  4. **Fury** deals with the excess of rage, a condition that can result in a person descending into madness or insanity. Dan. 2:12
  5. **Resentment** is a sustained moody feeling, leading one to brood over personal wrongs with a deep and lasting anger toward the object of his resentment.
  6. **Irritation** denotes the annoyance, frustration, or exasperation of one that has given in to anger.
  7. **Antagonism** is the mental attitude toward the object of anger; it may be confined to the mental attitude or given verbal or overt expression.
  8. **Hatred** is a related sin the stems from anger, which causes one to despise or detest the object of anger.
  9. **Hostility** is the unfriendly, non-receptive, or unsympathetic demeanor toward one that is the object of anger or hated. Acts 26:9
  10. **Bitterness** is anger and hatred perpetuated. When one nurtures his anger and hatred, he often desires to cause injury or pain to the object of his malice. Heb. 12:15
  11. **Jealousy** (the fear of losing something or someone to another) and **envy** (the desire to have what another has and you do not) often lead to anger and other associated mental attitude sins.

#### IV. The righteous anger of God.

- A. When the terms anger or wrath are used of the Lord, they are used anthropopathically to indicate the righteous execution of the perfect standards of righteousness and justice that God possesses.

- B. God's perfect standard of righteousness indicates that God knows what is correct or right in any given situation.
- C. His perfect standard of justice means that God will execute what His righteous standards demand, and that without partiality. Rom 2:11
- D. His omniscience guarantees that He has all the facts on any situation, while the attribute of omnipotence assures us that He has the power to execute what He knows to be the proper course of action.
- E. While we may not be omniscient, we can understand and orient to God's righteous standards through the intake of Bible doctrine. Ps. 119:7,62,123,144,160
- F. As we reprogram the brain computer with the standards of God, we will more closely reflect Him in the Devil's world and our emotional responses should become more like His. Matt. 5:48; Lk. 6:36
- G. God is portrayed in the Bible as being slow to anger, even when greatly provoked; His perfect patience proceeds from the attribute of love. Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8ff
  - 1. A change of mind and behavior may cause the Lord to relent from His anger. IIChron. 30:8; Jonah 3:5-10
  - 2. However, those that refuse to change their minds (repent) are busy storing up increments of wrath on a daily basis, which will be administered on the day of God's wrath. Rom. 2:5-8
- H. Specific categories of men with which God is angry:
  - 1. Those that rebel against the sovereign authority of God, exalting their will and authority over God's. Ex. 15:7, 14:27; Ps. 7:12-13; Isa. 5:24; Dan. 4:29-33
  - 2. Those that oppress others, who do not have sufficient wherewithal or a position to defend themselves; this includes the poor, aliens, widows, or orphans. Ex. 22:21, 23:9; Deut. 1:16; Zech. 7:10-13
  - 3. Grumblers, complainers, and those that reject their spiritual authorities. Num. 11:1, 14:2, 16:11-33
  - 4. The Exodus generation. Num. 32:8-14; Heb. 3:7-11
  - 5. The Lord is exceedingly angry against those that practice idolatry; this often expressed through the concept of jealousy. Deut. 6:13-15, 7:1-5 (failure to separate brings the wrath of God), 11:16-17, 31:16-18, 32:16-25
  - 6. Greed and sexual immorality are sins that bring the wrath of God on humanity. Col. 3:5-6
  - 7. All unbelievers are under the wrath of God on a daily basis; the only way to avert His wrath is by exercising faith in His Son. Ps. 7:11
    - a. This verse affirms God's absolute righteousness and perfect justice.
    - b. His perfect essence makes it certain that there will be a future judgment to punish evil and reward the righteous. Isa. 13:11; Isa. 24:21, 26:21
    - c. The fact that God delays the execution of His wrath does not indicate indifference on God's part. IIPet. 3:9
    - d. Psalm 7 clearly teaches that God's zeal against evil is far more constant than human zeal could ever be; He has no tendency to cool down, compromise or give up the fight.
    - e. God continues to have a daily sense of indignation and outrage over the evil we see and hear, as well as that about which we do not know. Rom. 1:18

- f. All unbelievers are viewed as children of wrath, and can only be delivered from God's wrath through Jesus Christ. Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:9
  - g. The wrath of God abides continually on all unbelievers and, as we have observed, they continue to accumulate wrath on a daily basis. Jn. 3:36
- I. Jesus Christ demonstrated that anger was an appropriate response on several occasions during His earthly ministry.
  - 1. At the synagogue in Capernaum. Mk. 3:5
  - 2. With his own disciples. Mk. 10:13-14
  - 3. His actions and words demonstrated His anger when He emptied the Temple precincts on two separate occasions. Jn. 2:13-17; Mk. 11:15-17
  - 4. While there is no mention of an overt angry demeanor, there are other times when Jesus' words or actions demonstrated His anger against what He knew to be unrighteous. Matt. 16:23, 18:6-7, 23:13-36
- J. Believers are commanded to emulate God and have sanctified/righteous anger against evil. Eph. 4:26
  - 1. The command is clear and specific: **keep on being angry and yet do not commit sin**, indicating that there is a sanctified type of anger that does not proceed from the sin nature.
  - 2. Believers should not use this verse to rationalize STA activity, imputing their unrighteous anger to the Lord.
  - 3. Sanctified anger or righteous indignation occurs when a believer comes into contact with something that violates the norms and standards of God, and is directed against various forms of evil and those engaged in them.
  - 4. Some examples of righteous anger include:
    - a. Jacob's anger against Rachel, his maladjusted wife, for whining about her lack of children. Gen. 30:2
    - b. The anger of Potiphar when he believed Joseph had raped his wife. Gen. 39:19
    - c. Moses' anger against the Jews for violating the clear teaching concerning the manna. Ex. 16:20
    - d. Moses' anger against their idolatry. Ex. 32:15-20
    - e. Moses exhibited righteous anger toward Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, as they led the congregation in revolt. Num. 16:1-15
    - f. Jonathan's anger against the negative volition of his father Saul, as manifested by his unrighteous treatment of David. ISam. 20:34
    - g. Nehemiah's anger against the extortion being practiced by the Jewish leadership. Neh. 5:6
    - h. David's anger against the man in the parable of Nathan. IISam. 12:5
    - i. The owner of the unforgiving slave. Matt. 18:34
- V. The unrighteous anger of man.
  - A. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of anger does not fall into the category of righteous indignation, but is a product of the old sin nature.
  - B. The scriptures make it plain that anger is a mental attitude sin that originates in STA; further, believers are to seek to overrule sinful anger. Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8
  - C. Jesus taught that anger is mental attitude murder. Matt. 5:21-22

1. His contemporaries among the Jews had been educated in the Mosaic Law and knew that it prohibited murder. Gen. 9:6; Ex. 20:13
2. The Mosaic Law taught that the punishment for murder was death, a fact Jesus never disputed. Num. 35:29-34
3. However, although their thinking on this matter was correct as far as it went, their understanding of the Law was superficial, and did not address the root cause of murder.
4. The words of Jesus in Matthew 5 are not intended to contradict or change the prohibition against murder; they are intended to demonstrate that the righteousness of the kingdom demands much more than simply refraining from overt murder.
5. His teaching is designed to make them understand that mental attitude anger is not only the root cause of murder, but that it also brings judgment on the individual that engages in it.
6. He presents three scenarios that are all precursors to the potential of overt murder, with each case carrying a progressively greater judgment.
7. The first example deals with a believer that is angry with another believer and will not rebound the sin and resolve the issue.
  - a. This person is guilty before the Lord and subject to judgment and the phrase **liable to the court** could also be translated **guilty and deserving of condemnation**.
  - b. This must refer to Divine discipline or judgment since no human court is competent to try a case of mental attitude anger.
  - c. This example deals with the believer that will not judge himself (ICor. 11:31), but perpetuates the sin. Eph. 4:26
8. The second situation Jesus uses is far more serious; the believer now engages in verbal insults toward the object of his mental attitude anger.
  - a. Like the first example, the object of anger is a fellow believer.
  - b. All three examples deal with a strong and settled anger as opposed to a passing irritation, as seen in the Greek verb ὀργίζω (orgizo).
  - c. The distinction between the first case and the second case of anger is that the second involves the verbal sin of cursing the object of anger.
  - d. **Raca** is a transliteration of an Aramaic word that means *imbecile, fool, empty head, or good for nothing*.
  - e. The guilt and punishment in this second example is greater than that of the first as seen in the words **supreme court**, indicating that God considers this at the highest level of His justice.
9. The third case deals with mental attitude anger that manifests itself by the ultimate verbal insult.
  - a. It should be evident that the term **brother** is not used in this example, leading many to suggest that this is a case that involves an unbeliever attacking a believer.
  - b. In any case, we know that unbelievers do not go to Hell based on any sins they have committed; they go to Hell due to their unbelief.
  - c. The point is that anyone that has allowed their anger to control them so they verbally deride another person has incurred enough guilt to go into the fiery Hell.
  - d. It has been suggested that the term **fool** may have a more serious intent than merely senselessness or foolishness; it may suggest spiritual rebellion or apostasy.
  - e. A perfect example of this is the anger that the unbeliever Cain had for his believing brother Abel, anger that ended in overt murder. Gen. 4:5-6; IJn. 3:12

- D. Believers are specifically told to avoid anger when attempting to take in Bible doctrine. James 1:18-21
1. The protocol by which adjusting believers are to operate is seen in verse 19, **quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.**
  2. The anger of man does not advance the plan of God, is not compatible with being in fellowship, does not comply with God's righteousness.
  3. The believer that is truly humble, acclimated to the authority of God as given to the pastor-teacher, having isolated the STA via rebound, and maintaining the **slow to anger** mentality is the only one that is truly teachable and able to **receive the word implanted.**
  4. This process is necessary if one desires to be delivered from the domination of the sin nature and loss at the Bema seat.
- E. Parents are specifically warned against provoking their children to anger by unrealistic expectations or demands. Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21
1. Parents are not to discipline their children out of anger or frustration since such actions do not advance the plan of God. James 1:20
  2. A child should be disciplined consistently and fairly, employing appropriate verbal and physical correctives; spanking is the biblical corrective that God advocates when words do not get the job done. Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15
  3. While there may be those that abuse this principle, it does not change the fact that the principle is valid; you should be wary of anyone that is opposed to the wisdom of God on this matter.
  4. Parenting is demanding work and must be done in fellowship, employing the doctrinal principles learned in Bible class; it is not to be accomplished through a reign of terror, which demoralizes the child. Deut. 4:9, 6:6-7; Eph. 6:4
- F. Examples of unrighteous anger.
1. Cain and Abel. Gen. 4:5
  2. Simeon and Levi. Gen.34:7,13, 49:6-7
  3. Balak and Balaam. Num. 24:10
  4. Saul and Jonathan. ISam. 20:30
  5. Haman and Mordecai. Esth. 5:9
  6. Jonah. Jon. 4:1-9
  7. Herod the Great. Matt. 2:16
  8. The people in Nazareth. Lk. 4:28
  9. The older brother of the prodigal son. Lk. 15:28
  10. The multitude in John 7. Jn. 7:23
  11. The Sanhedrin. Acts 5:33
  12. Those that stoned Stephen. Acts 7:54
  13. Saul of Tarsus. Acts 8:1-3, 9:1

- VI. Various things that accompany anger or are associated with it.
- A. The mental attitude sin of anger may or may not be accompanied by a verbal or overt response; however, it is still a sin that must be acknowledged and addressed.
  - B. Anger is seldom an isolated sin, it is often accompanied by other sins; therefore, it is often linked to other mental attitude, verbal, or overt sins.
  - C. Anger may lead to anxiety and worry, which may lead the believer into further evil. Ps. 37:8

- D. Unresolved anger can lead to the related sin of hatred, from which many other sins will likely arise. Prov. 10:12, 26:26; Tit. 3:3
- E. In that regard, anger that is not acknowledged and addressed via rebound but allowed to continue to smolder lead to the associated sins of unforgiveness, bitterness and implacability, which may adversely affect many. Col. 3:19; IITim. 3:3; Heb. 12:15
- F. Malice, which is the desire to injure or harm another, is often associated with anger. Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8
- G. Envy and jealousy that are not addressed will likely lead to anger, which can progress from cruelty to the extreme of overt murder. Prov. 6:34, 27:4; Gen. 4:1-8
- H. Anger is a sin that prompts other verbal sins like gossip, maligning, and abusive speech, which are violations of the Royal Honor Code. Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8
- I. In that regard, the believer should seek to respond to provocation in a manner that does not further inflame a situation. Prov. 15:1
- J. Once a person becomes angry, he may not be content to suffer alone; he may seek to arouse others by means of slander or spreading strife. Prov. 16:28, 30:33
- K. The angry person promotes strife by virtue of his contentious, argumentative attitude; he continues to expand his transgressions by spreading strife. Prov. 26:21, 29:22
- L. The wise man recognizes the dangers of sinful anger and is willing to absorb various offenses, not making an issue out of every affront. Prov. 14:29, 16:32, 19:11
- M. The angry man will eventually suffer for his anger; even if you succeed in calming him down, you will be confronted with his anger again. Prov. 19:19
- N. The fool succumbs to his anger on such a regular basis that the anger becomes a permanent part of his character. Prov. 12:16, 14:33, 29:11; Eccles. 7:9
- O. Sinful anger, and the strife, dissension, and hostility it engenders, becomes an impediment to effective prayer. IITim. 2:8

VII. Some practical observations and advice on sinful anger, its causes, its results, and how to address it.

- A. As we have observed, anger is an emotional response to something that triggered the anger, it is secondary response and may be evoked by something as simple as an inconsistency between what we expect and what we obtain.
- B. The initial feeling that triggers an angry response may be fear, disappointment, shame, guilt, jealousy, envy, pain, and even fatigue or hunger. Gen. 4:5; Num. 24:10
- C. For instance, we may get angry with our wife or children due to an accumulation of incidents that have not been resolved, such as pressure at work, financial pressure, fatigue, etc.
- D. Further, when we transfer the responsibility for our anger to another person, we justify whatever actions we choose to take, since it is clearly their fault that we feel this way; therefore, they must deserve whatever response we chose to give.
- E. Many disputes, arguments, and violence are the result of anger, and anger is often prompted by pride. Prov. 29:22-23
  - 1. Pride is one of the reasons that men take to heart the slights, insults, and injuries they receive from others.
  - 2. Sometimes, they are not enraged because of some real damage done to them, but simply by the injury to their pride.

- F. Anger is not a mark of intelligence, but of foolishness; therefore, while some people would advise you to be assertive and use your temper to get your way, this is not wise behavior. Prov. 30:29-33; Eccles. 7:9
- G. It is also not wise to suppress anger, silently bear grudges, refuse to forgive, and become bitter and resentful. Heb. 12:15
- H. One should address the situation without anger; however, if you cannot resolve a dispute, you must forgive the person, forget about it, and move on. Lev. 19:18; Ps. 55:3
- I. As a general rule, we are to be slow to anger, ignoring trivial things that may be slights to our pride and only become angry when it is truly justifiable, since anger may inhibit our reason. Prov. 14:17,29, 16:32, 19:11,19; James 1:19
- J. We must seek to avoid using anger, loud and abusive speech, and/or violence when dealing with pressures, recognizing that such activities only serve to engender more anger. Prov. 15:1; Eph. 5:22-29; IPet. 3:7; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21
- K. We are also to be cognizant of those that are easily angered and seek to avoid them lest we begin to emulate their behavior. Prov. 22:24
- L. While anger may be the result of something that triggered that emotional response, anger can become the killer of our happiness, joy, peace, and even our health. Prov. 17:22
  - 1. One researcher that has spent over 20 years studying the impact of the emotions on health says, *“I’m not talking about the anger that drives people to shoot, stab or otherwise wreak havoc on their fellow humans. I mean the everyday sort of anger, annoyance, and irritation that courses through the minds and bodies of many perfectly normal people.”*
  - 2. He further states that if your immediate impulse when faced with the everyday delays, frustrations, and irritations of life is to blame someone, and if your blame results in aggressive words or actions, then, getting angry is like taking a small dose of some slow-acting poison.
  - 3. According to a study of more than 1000 people, over a 25 year period, those with high hostility scores were at high risk of dying not only from coronary disease, but from cancer as well, suggesting that the immune system may be weaker in hostile people.
  - 4. This accords quite well with what we find in the Word of God. Prov. 16:22; Eccles. 5:17, 7:9
- M. Therefore, we must develop realistic expectations about anger, accepting it as a natural human emotion, identifying things that trigger our anger, and seeking to manage anger biblically
- N. When we become aware of feeling angry, we should ask ourselves three questions.
  - 1. Is this matter really that important to me?
  - 2. When I consider the facts objectively, is my anger justified?
  - 3. Is there anything I can do to change this situation?
- O. Even if the answer to all three is yes, one should not immediately respond with anger; one should take a few deep breaths before he speaks or acts. *“Slow to anger”*
- P. If the answer to any of the three questions is no, you must seek to reason with yourself, adjust your thinking, consider things from God’s perspective, and bring the Divine viewpoint to bear on your test.
- Q. There is research that suggests that physical activity is beneficial in helping people to relieve stress, as well as acting as a catharsis for anger.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.imt.net/~randolfi/ExerciseStress.html>