

ANGER

I.

Introduction

Anger is an emotion that God made part of our make up. Everything that God gave us, He gave us for our help and we need to use it in a good way. Only if we use anger in a good way that is in harmony with God's will, such good anger will profit us. However, we tend to use anger in a wrong way that is not in harmony with God's will and such bad anger can cause lots of harm to us and to others. Purpose of this lesson is to point out the dangers of bad anger, explain what is good anger and suggest what to do about bad anger.

II.

Bad anger

Imagine this situation: two kids, brother and sister have a disagreement about a toy which belongs to the girl. The boy snatches the toy for himself and the girl gets angry about it. She screams and yells and tells on him to dad. Dad tells son to give the toy back to his sister, which he does. When dad does not see the daughter, she makes a face at her brother. Now her brother gets angry and he whacks her. She gets angry again, screams and yells and tells on him to dad again and so on. Does that situation sound familiar to you? Have you seen something like that? I have seen similar situation and I know for sure that I do not want this to be the pattern of behavior of my children.

In situation I brought up to your attention, anger caused two siblings to treat one another in a bad way. What we usually notice and deal with concerning children is the last step, i.e., external misbehavior. But let's not neglect to deal with equally bad children's internal misbehavior, i.e., bad attitudes, bad feelings and thoughts. The same pattern of anger and evil treatment of others applies not only to children, but also to adults and because Christians are not perfect humans, it applies to Christians as well. However, in case of Christians we do not speak of a misbehavior, but sin. And Christian can commit sin not only by some external action, but also internally by bad feelings and thoughts.

Let's read Matthew 5:21-22 In v. 21 Jesus deals with the 6th commandment of Moses Law: You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. That means that if one takes the life of another, with malice, or with intention to murder him, he shall be held guilty, and be punished for it. The punishment set by God for murder was death (Leviticus 24:21)

Interpreters of Moses' Law explained to their fellow Jews the 6th commandment the way that God says "no no" to murder and therefore murder is evil in the sight of God and it must be punished by death, but if one is merely angry with someone else, he is not guilty of murder in the sight of God.

However, God's two greatest commandments are to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might and love your neighbor as yourself, and keeping these two commandments requires from one more than mere avoiding the external act of murder. (Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18)

I believe that Jesus in Matthew 5:22 tells us that these two greatest commandments apply not only to external acts, but even to evil attitudes, evil thoughts and feelings, for which one shall be held guilty, and punished by God. Let's read Matthew 5:22 again: "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother,

'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. (NKJV)

Now let's compare v. 21 with first sentence of v. 22. According to v. 21, whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment. The judgment for murder is death and it is executed by human courts. Now notice similar wording of first sentence of v. 22: whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. Human courts do not judge people for mere anger, therefore the judgment in v. 22 must belong to God who will execute it on the judgment day, unless one repents of his sin.

Some people after reading v. 22 might breath out in relief, because they think they have a cause to be angry with their brother. However in 12 different English translations in Power Bible software, only 5 of them read "without a cause" among them are e.g. KJV, NKJV. The remaining 7 do not contain this expression and among them are e.g. ASV, RSV. It is because some of the ancient manuscripts do not have the Greek word "eike" that is being translated as without a cause. Beside, Jesus would not teach anything new if He said do not be angry without a cause. Interpreters of Moses' Law opposed by Jesus in v. 21 taught the same thing. Therefore, we should be careful to think that we have authority to be angry with other people, because we think we have a cause for that. Let's remember that whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of God's judgment on the judgment day, unless he repents of his sin. And it is a terrifying thing to fall into hands of the living God. – Hebrews 10:30-31

As I have said in the beginning, anger is an emotion. It's triggered by injustice done to us and it stirs up our thoughts and feelings. Our tendency is to directed this anger against the person who committed the injustice to us and that is a bad anger. If we do not avoid it, or quit it, bad anger may drive us to other undesirable destinations. One of them is feelings of contempt for other human being. Jesus uses as example term "Raca!". Raca is external expression of feelings of contempt. English equivalents are: empty one, or worthless (as a term of utter vilification). Raca scorns one's mind. **Contempt** is a serious offense in the sight of God. Jesus says that the transgressor shall be in danger of council, which is translation of word Sanhedrin that is in original Greek text. Sanhedrin was the highest court of Jews. This court alone was the first instance for transgressors of the highest crimes and it passed death sentences. It is the same court that passed death sentence on Jesus. Transgressor who was in danger of Sanhedrin was in danger of serious punishment. Likewise person guilty of sin of contempt is in danger of serious punishment that will be executed by God on the judgment day, unless he repents of his sin.

As another example Jesus uses term "You fool!". The word in original Greek text is "Moros". Moros is external expression of feelings of contempt, possibly even hatred for other human being. English equivalents are: dull or stupid (as if shut up), i.e. heedless, (morally) blockhead, fool. Moros scorns one's heart and character. Some of the commentators suggest that Moros implies even idea of impiety, ungodliness. If so, then moros was term of utmost hatred and mortal enmity. To tell a Jew in Jesus time that he is ungodly was a serious accusation and if proved, he should be put to death. However, in Matthew 5:21-22 context, word moros is uttered in anger, without being proved by evidence. **Hatred** is a serious offense in sight of God. Jesus says that the transgressor shall be in danger of hell fire, which is translation for words Gehenna of fire. Gehenna signifies the valley of Hinnom. This formerly a pleasant valley, south of Jerusalem was a place where idolatrous Israelites worshipped Moloch with infernal sacrifices of their children. This worship was destroyed by King Josiah, who polluted the entire valley so as to make it an unfit place even for heathen worship. It was the fire of idolatrous worship in the offering of human sacrifices which had given the valley its bad

name. Jewish mind associated Gehenna with sin and suffering and later on with the place of final and eternal punishment. Transgressor who was in danger of Gehenna of fire was in danger of great suffering. Likewise person guilty of sin of **hatred** is in danger of great suffering that will be executed by God on the judgment day, unless he repents of his sin.

From Matthew 5:21-22 we should note that while sin has stages, God takes note of it from its very first germination in the heart, and that a man's soul is imperiled long before his evil feelings bear their fruit of violence and murder. In other words in Christ's kingdom evil attitude, evil feelings and thoughts, revengeful passions and evil words, will be regarded and treated as murder. - 1. John 3:15.

To sum it up, bad anger is directed against another person, it has to do with evil attitude, revengeful passions, feelings of contempt, hatred, injurious words and it makes enemies out of people. If someone hates us because of Jesus and His Word, it is OK, but if someone hates us because of our bad anger, then it is not OK.

Bad anger is an obstacle in our service to God: Matthew 5:23-24. External act of worship will not do for lack of internal act of mind and heart. If we have thoughts and feelings of anger, revenge, contempt and hatred against other human, our soul is not right with God and we need to repent of such sin. We need to make our mind and heart right with God before we perform outward act of worship. If our bad anger caused us to offend other human with our words, we need to repent of such sin and try to get reconciled with the person we sinned against. Only then our worship will be acceptable for God.

III. ***Good anger***

What is good anger? Even good anger is an emotion, which stirs up our thoughts and feelings, but for anger to be good, it should not be directed against other human. The best way how to understand good anger is to analyze Jesus' anger. - Mark 3:4-5

In this particular case, Pharisees who replaced God's law with human traditions were watching Jesus whether He would heal a man who had withered hand in synagogue on Sabbath day that they might find an accusation against Him to kill him. Jesus knew what they were up to and He approached them with a question: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" In another words, if one can do good by helping his neighbor to save his life on Sabbath day and he neglects it and the person dies, is not that a murder? So Pharisees, is it in harmony with God's law to save life or to kill on Sabbath day? Of course, it was lawful to save life on the Sabbath day. And if it was lawful to save whole life on Sabbath day, then why not to save one limb? But the Pharisees kept silent and showed how little they cared for their neighbor and consequently how little they cared for God's two greatest commandments. At this point Jesus looked at them with anger being grieved by the hardness of their hearts. Jesus' anger wasn't directed against particular people and had nothing to do with revengeful passions, contempt or hatred for Pharisees. Jesus' anger was directed against people's sin and had to do with grief for hardness of their hearts.

Before I move on with good anger, let me emphasize that principle Jesus pointed out in His question to Pharisees applies to us as well. If we know to do good and we do not do it, we have a sin. - James 4:17 If we can feed the hungry, cloth the naked, instruct the ignorant of God's will, or send the gospel to people at other places, and we don't do it, we are guilty, for we suffer evils to exist which we might remove. Let's notice, that the wicked will be condemned on the day of judgment, because they "did not do" - Matthew 25:45

To sum it up, good anger is not directed against another person and has nothing to do with evil attitude, revengeful passions, feelings of contempt, hatred and injurious words. Good anger is indignation at hypocrisy, immorality or whatever the sin may be and has to do with our grief at persons' state, when this person sinned.

Someone may object that Jesus outlaws injurious words like *moros* – fool, but He Himself uses the same word in Matthew 23:17-19. However, Jesus does not apply it to a particular people, but in general to false teachers and blind guides of the people.

IV.

Example of application of good anger by Christians from Scriptures

First, let me give you some background information. The context is as following. Paul wrote to Christians a letter that we call 1. Corinthians, where in chapter 5 he writes about serious problems they had in church. Let's scan through the problems:

- v. 1 problem # 1 sexual immorality among you
- v. 2 problem # 2 you are puffed up
- v. 6 problem # 3 your glorying is not good
- v. 6 problem # 4 a little leaven leavens the whole lump

Solutions of the problems are in the rest of chapter 5.

Christians in Corinth were guilty of tolerating sin, instead of dealing with sin and sinner and Paul rebuked them for that and told them to separate themselves from evil. It was so harsh letter, that Paul regretted that he wrote it, but when Titus brought him report from Corinth, Paul did not regret anymore, that he made Christians sorry with his letter. Paul rejoiced that sorrow led them to repentance leading to salvation. Therefore it was a goodly sorrow. Now notice, that this godly sorrow produced in Christians in Corinth indignation - 2. Corinthians 7:10-11.

Indignation against sin is when heart rises, swells, and boils against sin. We are angry not with a person, but with his sin and our anger is tempered with grief for the condition of the one who sinned, especially if he is not willing to repent and church must terminate fellowship with him. We are then angry and sin not. - Ephesian 4:26.

V.

Conclusions and applications

A person who is controlled by bad anger is likely to spread evil. – Proverbs 29:22. Bad anger can cause one to do even terrible crimes, e.g., angry Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:6-8). And as we have read, bad anger is an obstacle in our service to God.

What can we do about bad anger?

1] Let us avoid bad anger:

Ec 7:9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Ps 37:8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret-it only causes harm.

Col 3:8 ¶ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

If we can, let us avoid situations or people that make us angry, but that is not always possible. Once, we feel bad anger, we better quit and repent of it, before we get to revengeful passions, contempt, hatred or injurious words.

2] Let us not associate ourselves with angry people:

Pr 21:19 ¶ Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.

Pr 22:24 ¶ Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go,

3] Let's practice good anger instead of bad anger:

We ought not, for any cause, to be angry with the sinner, but with his sins only. That's what Jesus did, that's what we need to do. This way, we will hate sin even more and it will help us to avoid sin.

4] Let's practice love:

Pr 10:12 ¶ Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

Even if we are the ones, who were hurt by someone else, we can still have our passions under control, instead of our passions having control over us. We can tell the person that what he/she said or did hurt us and ask the person not to say or do it again. If person repents, we need to forgive him/her.

To conclude this sermon, let me say that only if we use anger in way that is in harmony with God's will, we can please God and our life here on the earth will be happy.

***VI.
Invitation***

Jesus was unjustly condemned to death, tortured and nailed to the cross by sinful and evil men, but yet, we do not find Him filled with anger, contempt, hatred or injurious words. Instead, we read, that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34) When Jesus came the first time, He came to die for our sins and offer us salvation. When He will come the next time, He will come to judge us, the physical world will cease to exist and there will be only eternity. Either eternity with God in His Heavenly Kingdom or eternity in punishment and separation from God. Are you out of Christ and want to spend eternity with God, who is the source of life and provider all we need for our life? Make the right decision - for Christ - today!

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