

## Anger Management

**A**nger is a passionate emotional response to a perceived evil that would cross us or hinder us from something good. It has been given to us by God for our good. It stirs us up to vigorous resistance against anything that opposes God's glory, our salvation, our real good, or the good of our neighbours. Anger is therefore good when it is used to its appointed end, in the right manner and measure. But anger may be sinful.

### When anger is sinful

1. When it opposes God or good; as in the case of those who become angry with us because we seek to win them to the Lord or separate them from their sins.
2. When it disturbs our reason, and hinders us from thinking rightly.
3. When it causes us to act unbecomingly, so as to cause sinful words or actions.
4. When it causes us to wrong one another by our words and deeds, or to treat others in a way in which we would not like to be treated.
5. When it is mistaken and with no just cause behind it.
6. When it is greater in measure than that which provoked the anger.
7. When it makes us unfit to do our duty to God or man

8. When it hinders love, brotherly kindness and the good we might do for others.
9. When it encourages malice, revenge, contentions, division, oppression of those under us, and dishonor to those over us.
10. When it lasts too long, and does not cease when it has accomplished its purpose.
11. When it used as a means to further our selfish, carnal and sinful end. When we are angry because our pride, profit, enjoyment, or fleshly will is crossed.

## **Considerations to hinder sinful anger**

1. Uncontrolled anger injures humanity and rebels against reason. It is without reason and against reason. All passion should always be under the control of reason. It is madness, and like the crime of drunkenness, to suppress and dethrone our reason.

Sinful anger is temporary madness or drunkenness, since our reason is set aside. Remember that you are a man, and that it is a dishonor to yield to fury like an animal.

2. God intended to govern our rational powers first, and then our lesser powers through them. Sinful passion silences our reason, so that we are in no fit state to obey the commands of God.

3. Sinful passion is a pain and sickness of the mind. Will you love or cherish your disease or pain? Do you not feel yourself in pain and diseased while it is upon you? No one would want to live continually in that state. In such a state, what good can be accomplished? How can you enjoy life? What comfort is your life to you? If sinful passion is bad over a long period, how can it be good even for a short time? Do not willfully keep so troublesome a sickness in your mind?
4. Observe also what an enemy it is to your body. It inflames the blood, stirs up diseases, breeds bitter displeasure in the mind, consumes our strength, and casts many into acute and chronic sickness leading even to death. And how comfortless a death this is.
5. Observe how unlovely and displeasing you are to those who observe you. Anger deforms the countenance, and takes away the sweet and pleasant appearance that you have when you express a calm and loving temperament. If you were always like this, would anybody love you? Would they not get out of your way (if they did not lay hands on you), as they would do to anything that is wild or mad? You would not want your picture taken while in a state of fury. Your frowns and inflamed blood mar your countenance. Do not love that which makes you so unlovely to others.

6. You should shun this anger because it hurts others and is an enemy to love and the good of others. Every time you are angry you are inclined to hurt those that angered you and anyone else in the path of your fury. Anger puts hurtful thoughts in your mind and hurtful words in your mouth and entices you to strike out or do some other mischief. Nobody loves a hurtful person. Avoid so troublesome a passion.
7. Take note of the tendency of your anger. You will find that if it is not stopped early, it will lead to the utter ruin of your brother, bloodshed, and your own damnation. How many thousands has anger murdered or undone. It has caused wars, and filled the world with blood and cruelty. Should your hearts give place to such a fury?
8. Consider how much other sin stems from sinful anger. It is like drunkenness, in which a man does not have control of himself and so lays himself open to great wickedness. How many oaths and curses does it cause every day. How many rash and sinful actions what villainy has anger not done. It has slandered, blasphemed, reproached, falsely accused, and injured many thousands. It has murdered and ruined families, cities, and states. It has made parents kill their children, and children dishonor their parents. It has made kings oppress and murder their subjects, and subjects rebel and murder kings. What a world of sin is committed by sinful anger throughout the

world. How endless are the illustrations of it. David himself was once drawn by it to intend murdering the whole family of Nabal. All this should make it odious to us.

9. Anger is a sin that does not leave you to sin alone. It stirs up others to do the same. Wrath kindles wrath, as fire kindles fire. When you are angry you will make others angry, or discontented, or troubled by your words and deeds, once you have provoked others to anger, you do not know the extent of the sin it may lead them to. You do not have power to moderate their anger after yours has subsided. It is the devils bellows to kindle man's corruptions and set hearts, families, and kingdoms aflame.
10. Notice how unfit it makes you for holy duties; for prayer, meditation, or any communion with God. This should trouble gracious souls, that anything should make us unfit to speak to God or to be employed in his worship. If indeed you do engage in prayer or other worship in a passion of anger, may not God say as Achish, king of Gath, did of David, "have I need of mad men?" Anger makes all of us - family, church, or society unprepared for the worship of God. Is the family prepared for prayers when wrath has muddied and disturbed their minds? It divides Christians and churches, and causes confusion and every evil work' (*James 3:15, 16*)

11. It is a great dishonor to the grace of God that any servant of his should have little self-control. It causes the world to wonder that grace has no more force or efficacy to rule a raging passion. It is a dishonor to God when we do not possess our souls with more patience, fear of God, or self-control. Do not wrong God by so dishonouring his grace and Spirit.
12. It is a sin against our consciences. When one comes to oneself, in a proper frame of mind, the conscience is stricken, and the soul smitten with sorrow over the failure. The realization that we must repent afterwards should make us seek to avoid that which causes so much shame and sorrow.

## OBJECTION ONE

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**But you may say:** 'I am of a hasty choleric nature, and cannot help it'.

**Answer:** It is true that your temperament may be more prone to anger than other temperaments, but this cannot force you to sinful anger. Reason and will, functioning as they should, can command and master passion. If you realize your own tendency to anger, this very fact should make you even more alert and watchful concerning it.

## OBJECTION TWO

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'But the provocation was so great it would have angered anyone in the same circumstances'

**Answer:** This is a weak argument, that you should think that some provocation can be great enough to overrule a man's reason and allow him to break the laws of God. The provocation which you call so great would have been small or non-existent to a man who had a prepared mind. You should rather say, God's majesty and dreadfulness are so great that I should not even consider offending him for any provocation. Has not God given us greater cause to obey than man can give us to sin?

## OBJECTION THREE

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'But it happened so fast that I had no time to deliberate or to prevent it.'

**Answer:** Do you not still have reason? Should not your reason be as ready to rule as passion is to rebel? Quench passion as it rises and take time for deliberation.

## OBJECTION FOUR

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'I am angry for a very short time, and then I am sorry for it when it is over'

**Answer:** But if it is evil, even if it is short, it is still a sin and to be avoided. If you know beforehand that you will be sorry, why will you breed your own sorrow?

## OBJECTION FIVE

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'Everybody is angry sometimes. Even the best'

**Answer:** Sin is never better because many commit it. If you observe others ruled by the grace of God, you will find that there are many who are not easily angered nor do they behave themselves furiously, railing, cursing, swearing, or doing wrong to other.

## OBJECTION SIX

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'I do not allow the sun go down on my anger, so it is not sinful anger- "Let not the sun go down upon you wrath" (*Eph. 4:26*)

**Answer:** The apostle never said that anger is only sinful when it continues after the sun has gone down. Paul told us not to entertain any sinful anger at all. If you should do so, however, quench it quickly and do not continue in it. Do not be angry without a cause, or go beyond the cause. When you are angry, do not sin by acting unlovingly and do not allow any evil words or deeds to spring up. Do not allow your displeasure, even if it is just, to continue. Hasten to be reconciled and to forgive.

## Practical directions against sinful anger

### DIRECTION ONE

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The principal help against sinful anger lies in accustoming the soul to right attitudes.

We must live under the authority of God, with a sense of obedience to him directing our hearts. Our hearts should ever be aware of the mercy of him that forgave us and keeps us, and of the grace that assists us and heals us. Our hearts should also be mindful of the love we owe to God and man. Such a heart is continually fortified and draws its source of preservation from within itself. Just as wrath emerges from within us, so may meekness. The main cause of wrath or meekness lies within.

### DIRECTION TWO

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Be careful to keep a humbled soul that does not think too highly of itself, for humility is patient and does not exaggerate injuries. A proud man considers things as heinous or intolerable that are said or done against him. He that thinks lowly of himself sees things done or said against him as of little significance. He that magnifies himself sees offences against him also magnified. Pride is a very impatient sin: there is no pleasing a proud person, without a great deal of wit, care, and diligence. You must

take as much care around him as you do around straw or gunpowder when you are holding a candle.

'By insolence comes nothing but strife' (*Prov. 13:10*)

'An arrogant man stirs up strife' (*Prov. 28:25*)

'Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt' (*Psa. 31:18*)

Humility, meekness, and patience live and die together.

### DIRECTION THREE

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Be careful to avoid a worldly and covetous mind.

The worldly mind sets such store by earthly things that every loss, opposition, or injury unsettles and inflames its passions. No one can please a covetous man. Every little trespass or crossing of his desires cuts him to the quick and makes him impatient.

### DIRECTION FOUR

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Put a stop to your anger early, before it goes too far.

It is easier to control anger in its beginning. Keep an eye on the first stirrings of your wrath and make it obey you. Your will and reason have great power in the control of anger if you will only use them according to

their nature. A spark is easier to quench than a flame, and a serpent is easier to crush before it hatches out.

## DIRECTION FIVE

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Take control of your tongue, hands, and countenance, even if you cannot at the moment quiet or command your passion.

In this way you will avoid the greatest of the sin, and the passion itself will quickly subside because it lacks an outlet. You cannot say that it is not in your power to restrain your tongue or hands if you wish to. You must not only avoid the swearing and cursing which are marks of the profane mind, but you must also avoid multiplying words, contentions, objections, and bitter and cutting speeches, which only tend to stir up the wrath of others. Use the mild and gentle speech which is characteristic of love and tends to cool the heat that has been kindled.

'A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger' (*Prov. 15:1*)

## DIRECTION SIX

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At the very least, keep silent until reason has had an opportunity to speak and you have had a chance to think. Do not be so hasty as not to consider what you are saying or doing. A little delay will let tempers cool and allow reason to do its work.

'With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone' (*Prov. 25:15*)

Patience will lessen another's anger, as well as your own. He is a madman, not a rational person, who cannot stop to think.

## DIRECTION SEVEN

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If you do not find it easy to quiet your anger or restrain yourself, then leave the place and company that have provoked you. Then you will not be further inflamed by contentious words, nor exasperate others by your own angry words. When you are alone, the fire will die down.

'Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge' (*Prov. 14:7*)

You would not stand stirring up a wasp's nest when you had already enraged the wasps.

## DIRECTION EIGHT

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Make it your habit to avoid talk and dispute with angry men, so far as you can do so without neglecting your duty.

Avoid all other occasions and temptations to this sin. A man that is in danger of a fever must avoid that which aggravates it. Do not go near the infected if you

fear the plague. Do not stand in the sun if you are too hot already. Keep as far as possible from that which provokes you most.

## DIRECTION NINE

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Do not meditate upon past injuries or things that have provoked you when you are alone.

Do not allow your thoughts to feed upon these things. If you do, you will be like a devil to yourself, and tempt yourself to anger when there is not one else to do it. You will make your solitude as provocative as if you were in the midst of those who provoke you. You will stir up anger in your heart by your own imagination.

## DIRECTION TEN

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Keep your minds in lively thought of the exemplary meekness and patience of Jesus Christ.

'He invites us to learn of him to be meek and lowly' (*Matt. 11:29*)

'Christ also suffered for you, leaving you and example, so that you might follow in his steps..... when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly' (*1 Pet. 2:21, 23*)

Remember that he has pronounced a special blessing on the meek, that they might 'inherit the earth' (*Matt. 5:5*)

## DIRECTION ELEVEN

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Live as in the presence of God; and when your passions grow bold, repress them with reverend name of God, and remind yourself that God and his holy angels are watching you.

## DIRECTION TWELVE

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Look at others in their passion, and consider how unlovely they make themselves.

Think of the frowning countenances, flaming eyes, threatening, devouring looks, and harmful tendencies of those controlled by passion, and then consider whether these are desirable examples to follow.

## DIRECTION THIRTEEN

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When anger rises, confess your sin without delay to those around. Take the shame to yourself. Shame the sin and honour God.

Accept the shame of the sin of unruly passion, which is a dishonor to God. This is in your power to accomplish if you will, and it will be an excellent means to prevent sinful anger.

When you are tempted to sin is anger, say to those around you: 'I feel a sinful anger rising in my heart and am tempted to forget God's presence and act in a way that is not proper for his glory and speak provoking words that I know would be displeasing to him'. In confessing your temptation, you will break the force of it, and stop the fire, so that it does not progress. If you stop the progress of your passion in this way, it will be a point of honour with you not to go on in the anger you have just confessed, for your reputation will then be at stake.

This direction must be followed with wisdom, so that the confession itself does not cause others to be hardened and provoked against you, or make you look ridiculous. But with prudence and due caution, this is an excellent remedy to follow, if you are willing to do so.

## DIRECTION FOURTEEN

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If you have allowed your passion to break out and to offend or wrong other, by word or deed, freely and speedily confess it to them, and ask them for forgiveness.

In confessing your fault, you may wish to warn others not to follow your bad example. This will do much to clear your conscience and preserve your brother. It will also help to overcome the effect of your anger, and motivate you to avoid this sin in the future. If you are so proud that you will not do this, do not say that you cannot help your anger, but rather that you are unwilling

to do so. A good heart will not think it is too difficult a remedy against any sin.

## DIRECTION FIFTEEN

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As far as circumstances allow, go immediately to God in prayer for pardon, and grace against this sin.

Sin will not endure prayer and the presence of God. Tell him how easily your irritable heart is kindled into sinful anger. Ask him to help you by his sufficient grace. Engage Christ, your Master and Advocate, to help you; and then your soul will grow obedient and calm.

Paul prayed three times concerning his thorn in the flesh (*2 Cor. 12:7-9*); and Christ prayed in his agony. So you must pray, and pray again and again, until you find God's sufficient grace for you.

## DIRECTION SIXTEEN

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Make a covenant with a faithful friend to watch over you and rebuke your passion as soon as they begin to appear. Promise him that you will take it thankfully and in a proper spirit.

And keep your promise, so that your friend is not discouraged. Either you are tired of your sin and failure and will to do all you can against it to find the victory, or you are not. If you are willing, you can do this. If you are not willing, do not pretend that you are repentant over your sin and truly want to be delivered when it is not

really so. Remember also that the effects of sinful anger make it, not a small sin, but a major one.

'Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools' (*Eccles. 7:9*)

'Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city' (*Prov. 16:32*)

'A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention' (*Prov. 15:18*)

'Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook and offence' (*Prov. 19:11*)