

January 19, 2003
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Help With Anger”
Gen 4: 1-11

It seems to me that many are angry today. Much of the new music is angry music. It sounds angry, it's performed angry, the words are violent. People are angry on the road. Road rage is becoming a great concern. I was at a red light on Vets Hwy. with cars in front of me. A pick up truck behind me was beeping at me because he wanted to get into the turning lane that had a green light (he didn't want to miss the light). I couldn't go anywhere. I didn't know what he wanted me to do. Finally I had a green light. As I moved forward he came along side of me and three or four times swerved his truck towards me as if to hit me. Some how he saw me as the cause for not getting what he wanted...to make the green light. I call different organizations to get a question answered and the person who is suppose to help seems angry and all I'm doing is asking them to do what they were hired to do. I guess they are angry that I am making them work. It is no wonder countries can't get along we can't get along with neighbors. We can't get along in our marriage, family, or church. It seems that many are angry and if it is not obvious at all times it is just below the surface ready to be revealed with even just slight provocation.

Anger is not always a bad thing. Anger can be sin but anger is not always sin. God gets angry but His anger is directed toward unrighteousness. God wants to end sin, not destroy the sinner. Our anger consumes others and ourselves; God's anger is against evil. Anger is an emotion, a very passionate emotion, perhaps the most passionate. Emotions are a gift from God and have a good purpose when used according to His will. Anger is an emotion given to us by God to motivate us to solve a problem. The sin is when we use it to hurt ourselves (internalizing it) or to hurt others (externalizing it). In other words, we either do the slow burn that tears us up inside, or we blow up all over someone else. We need to look at the object of our anger, our motive for anger and the outcome of our anger. When anger is self-centered or self-righteous then it is dangerous. If allowed to continue it will consume us. It can lead to bitterness (a bitter spirit). Bitterness can cause disorder in our life and every kind of evil. It can even cause violent behavior.

Let's look at Cain. Heb 11:4 tells us that, “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.” So, The LORD accepted Abel and his offering, but he did not accept Cain and his offering. Cain did the wrong thing and God told him so. This made Cain very angry and dejected. "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked him. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it."

What usually causes us to get angry?

We get angry when someone else is acknowledged over us (Cain was angry that Abel was acknowledged over him). *We get angry when we become jealous of what other have or have done* (perhaps there was jealousy on the part of Cain towards Abel. Jealousy can easily turn to evil and in this case it did). *We get angry when our pride is hurt*. (Again it is very possible that Cain's pride was hurt that what he offered was not acceptable). *We get angry when we don't get our way* (this is the most common cause of anger, not getting what we desire. In this case Cain desired acceptance on his terms). *We get angry when we are confronted about our sinful actions and are exposed* (as Cain was here). *We are angry because of deep hurt* (Cain was angry and depressed. The Lord said to him "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? Cain was feeling sorry for himself.

Anger is what we see on the surface. Below the surface is hurt. People are angry because deep down they feel insecure, unloved, and insignificant. It is easy for us to see the anger of others and react to it. What is not as easily seen is their pain. We would do well to minister to their need rather than react to their anger. In our own lives we may have a hard time recognizing anger as a secondary response caused by unresolved pain from the past. Usually it seems easier to stay angry rather than uncover the real cause. It is painful to probe into feelings from our past. Feelings of *injustice* (that a perceived right has been violated); *hurt* (that the heart has been wounded. Everyone has a God-given inner need for unconditional love. When you experience rejection or pain of any kind, anger can become a protective wall that keeps people and pain away); *fear* (the future is threatened. Everyone is created with a God-given inner need for security. When you begin to worry, feel threaten or get angry because of a change in circumstances, you are responding to fear. A fearful heart reveals a lack of trust in God's perfect plan for your life.); *Frustration* (performance is not accepted. Everyone has a God-given inner need for significance. When your own personal efforts do not meet your expectations, your sense of significance can be threatened. Frustration over unmet expectations of yourself or others is a major source of anger.)

What are the effects of anger?

Isolation from others, *ungodliness* and *evil motives*. Also, anger *blinds us to what is really good and right*. Anger leads to *conflict and arguments* and, in extreme cases, *violence, even murder*. Cain was angry, he did not listen to God's warning to do what was right even though he did not feel like it and later attacked and killed his brother.

What should we avoid when we are angry?

When you are angry avoid *acting on impulse* especially in the heat of anger. You are bound to do something you will regret. Parents *don't discipline* your children in the heat of anger. If you can, send them to their room to give yourself some time to cool down and think clearly. *Avoid speaking your mind* when you are angry (e.g. husbands and wives). You are bound to say something you will regret. Wait, but make a time when you can communicate not argue and resolve the conflict.

What should we do about anger?

A key passage is: Eph 4:26-32

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

(v26a *"In your anger do not sin"*). Anger at times is appropriate but it must be controlled or it is sinful. "But," you say, "that is just the problem. I can't control my temper." Yes, you can, what you mean is that you *don't* control your temper not "you can't!" I'll prove it. Let's suppose it is a rainy afternoon and everything has gone wrong. You've been cooped up with three preschoolers all day, a pot just boiled over on the stove ...(well, you fill in the additional details). Now, let us further suppose that the kids get into a fight, there is crying and whining and all the rest for the umpteenth time. You have tried, but now you've had it. You restrain your anger no longer. You erupt with screaming. Your nostrils are flaring, your face is red and it appears that steam is actually coming out of your ears. The kids are diving under tables, hiding in closets. It's a real disaster. Suddenly, in the midst of all this, the phone rings. On the other end is the head of the local gossip society. She would just love to hear you screaming at your kids. She is the last person that you would want to hear you carrying on like this. So... what do you do? Well, you sweetly say to her, "O, hello, it's nice to hear from you." What have you done? That's right, you have controlled your temper! You see, you can control your temper when you really want to or when you are highly motivated to do so. Isn't it strange (and sad) that you think it more important to control your temper with strangers or your boss than with your children or your spouse?

(v26b *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry*). Anger should not be ongoing. Many let not only the sun go down and the moon come up but also the moon go down and the sun come up and the sun go down again. Keep things current. Jesus taught us in Matt 5:21-26 to confront those with whom you are angry in order to restore your relationship with them (reconciliation). Don't give anger an opportunity to fester because it can easily be used by satan (v27 *do not give the devil a foothold*).

Control your temper (v29 *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*) use words that will help the situation (v30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*). It is always proper to acknowledge your emotions. It is never proper to pretend they do not exist. We can

easily stuff our emotions hiding them beneath an acceptable “Christian” mask. We ought to acknowledge to ourselves and to God how we feel, allowing ourselves to inwardly experience the full weight of our emotions. But we do not always have to express them. We should only express them when doing so will not conflict with our fulfilling God’s purposes. After we admit to ourselves that we feel angry we must immediately determine to retain full control over which emotions we express and how we express them. The principle then is first acknowledge then selectively express. When is expressing our emotions serving God purposes? When the goal is ministry not selfishness. When the goal and motive is love. When you want to help or build up the other person according to their needs, to benefit them; or to encourage reconciliation or to be helpful in some other way.

(v31 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice*). Anger can result in bitterness, it becomes rage and it produces fighting and maliciousness. But anger can be mastered through kindness and compassion and can be conquered through forgiveness (v32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*). Did you hear that last part...? “As in Christ God forgave you.” Here’s the catch. You knew there would have to be a catch. You can be helped with your anger but first you must know the forgiveness of God through Christ. Don’t try to deal with your anger first. First take a hard look at your life, recognize your sin (anger is a good place to begin) and your need for a Savior. First trust Christ to forgive you for your sin. Then, trust him to empower you to work on your anger. Remember how God has forgiven you, forgive others like you have been forgiven. When you are angry or bitter confess it to God and ask Him to replace it with kindness and compassion toward others. Be slow to anger, acknowledge anger, think through goals, assume responsibility for the proper goal and express negative feelings if doing so serves good purposes.