

Anger

Definition: Anger is a sin which expresses antagonism, hatred, exasperation, resentment, and irrationality. It can be based on thinking, or emotional, or both. The Greek word ὄργη (*orge*) is anger based on thought; the word θυμός (*thumos*) is anger based on emotion. Both types of anger are reactions to someone or something causing a bitter reaction and resulting in irrational thought, speech or action. Anger motivates gossip, judging, maligning, hatred, revenge, cruelty, violence and murder.

Some people might justify their anger (or any other sin) by saying it is a ‘natural reaction’ that can’t be stopped. This kind of thinking indicates a failure to take responsibility for your own thinking and behavior. To show that anger results from a volitional decision to become angry, let me present the following true story:

One time a man was made to appear before a judge and sentenced for reckless driving, a result of his ‘road-rage’. As part of his punishment he was ordered to seek psychiatric help to control his anger. At the first session he explained to the psychiatrist that there was no way he would ever cure his road-rage because it was an uncontrollable reaction, occurring every time some other driver cut in front of him. The psychiatrist suggested that they go for a drive, and as they approached the freeway, the psychiatrist said to the man (who was driving the car), “Every time a car cuts in front of you, I will give you 20 dollars.” Not long after that a car cut in front of them, but instead of getting angry the man was happy - of course!

In this instance the man was motivated by the promise of money not to become angry, but for the Christian the motivation not to become angry is far greater than money: peace in the soul, escape from divine discipline, and the opportunity to advance in the spiritual life.

Principles and scripture verses related to anger:

1. Anger and cruelty are sometimes related to jealousy:

“Wrath is fierce [cruel] and anger is a flood [affects all in its periphery], but who can stand against jealousy [a powerfully evil motivation]” (Proverbs 27:4).

These sins are mentioned in the same verse since they are related to one another. A jealous person easily becomes angry when crossed, and that anger can become extreme anger (wrath) which can develop into a desire for vengeance, and vengeance can be mercilessly cruel. In this relationship, the power base is jealousy.

2. Anger is related to stupidity:

“Do not be hasty to be angry in your heart [soul] for anger resides in the bosom of fools.” (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

A person is never able to think rationally when angry, which is why many stupid and embarrassing things are said in anger. If you become angry easily under pressure you are a stupid fool. You are a fool because you have not learned to think under pressure. A fool becomes emotional under pressure; a wise person thinks under pressure.

3. While an individual's volition is the source of anger, the sin nature provides the temptation to become angry:

"Now, the works [actions] of the flesh [sin nature] are plainly seen [perceptible; can be understood] which are ... antagonisms [hostile feelings and actions toward others related to pettiness], strife (discord) jealousy, outburst of anger. . ." (Galatians 5:19, 20).

4. An angry and hot-tempered person is a trouble maker:

"An angry person stirs up strife, and a hot tempered person abounds in transgression." (Proverbs 29:22).

5. Anger destroys a nation:

"So decrees the Lord, 'For three sins of [the nation of] Edom, even for four, I will not revoke its punishment because he pursued his brother [the descendants of Jacob] with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually, and he maintained his anger forever.' " (Amos 1:11).

6. Anger is associated with grieving the Holy Spirit:

"Stop grieving the Holy Spirit, the God by whom you have been sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be removed from you along with all malice." (Ephesians 4:30, 31)

7. The Christian is commanded to remove anger from his lifestyle:

"But now you also put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth." (Colossians 3:8).

8. Anger hinders effective prayer:

"Therefore, I desire that men in every place pray, lifting up holy hands [Jewish tradition] without anger and dissension." (1 Timothy 2:8).

9. Do not associate with a person who easily becomes angry. If you do, you will take on his characteristics and easily get into trouble:

"Do not associate with a man [become friends] given to anger or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself." (Proverbs 22:24, 25).

10. Even though Ephesians 4:26 is a quote from Psalm 4:4, it is slightly different.

“You are angry now [so] stop sinning [the Ephesians were in a state of anger]. Stop letting the sun go down on your anger.” (Ephesians 4:26)

The Greek verb *οργιζεσθε* (*orgizesthe*) can be either the present active imperative or the present active indicative since they are the same form in Greek. Now, which translation makes more sense to you: “Be angry” or “You are angry”? Some Bibles actually have the command “Be angry.” The translator had to have been on dope! Why would Paul command the Ephesians to be angry? Rather, Paul recognizes that they are angry and commands them to stop being angry.

The Greek negative *μη* (*me*) with the subjunctive form of the verb means ‘do not’ and the Greek negative *ου* (*ou*) with the future form also means ‘do not.’ However, in this passage we have the Greek negative *μη* with the present imperative. The present tense means you are doing it now; the imperative with the negative means to stop doing what you are doing.

Many of the Ephesians were not only angry, they were angry for weeks, for months, for years. You should always name any sin as soon as possible and then apply some promise, principle or doctrine to resolve that matter in order that you don’t immediately leave fellowship with God after regaining it, and definitely never go to sleep until you have solved the problem of anger. Never let anger persist beyond a day.

Remember that you are responsible for your attitude, and therefore have no right to blame anyone else if you do get angry. While a person or organization may commit an injustice against you, this is no excuse to get angry. Rather, it is an opportunity to apply Bible doctrine that you might pass the test placed before you and advance in your spiritual walk.

Whenever you are tempted to become angry, meditate on God’s solutions and in your relationship with the Lord. In this way, David was able to prevent the temptation of anger from becoming a sin. Although David was being treated unfairly, he was able to maintain his righteousness through the application of God’s Word to his situation.

“Tremble with reaction or agitation [to some injustice], yet do not sin; Meditate in your heart [on Bible doctrine in your soul] upon your bed and be still [no retaliation]. Selah”
(Psalm 4:4)