

CHAPTER 8

ANGER

**"Even if an angry person raises the dead, he is not acceptable in the eyes of God."
(St. Isaac)**

- A) Two kinds of anger**
- B) Holy anger**
- C) Evil anger: Its causes**
- D) Evil anger: Its ways and results**
- E) Slow to anger**
- F) Dealing with angry people**
- G) Some Advice for Angry People**

A) TWO KINDS OF ANGER

Not every kind of anger is a sin. There are two kinds of anger: one is essential and holy and the other is evil. We can distinguish between the two by knowing the reasons of anger, its way and development. Hence the Lord Jesus did not say, "Whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment," but He said, "Whoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the Judgment." (Matthew 5: 22)

The motive of this anger without a cause is personal and not holy. Moreover, many mistakes may accompany this kind of anger, like not controlling the nerves, humiliating others, insulting others, hitting others or even killing. St. Paul warned us from this kind of anger by saying, "Be angry, and do not sin." (Ephesians 4: 26) Also, St. James said, "For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1: 20)

Solomon the Wise said about the evil anger, "A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool's wrath is heavier than both of them." (Proverbs 27:3). He considered evil wrath as a kind of ignorance or lack of wisdom. Therefore he said, "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9) He also said, "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger." (Proverbs 19: 11)

B) HOLY ANGER

The motive for this holy anger is holy zeal for the name of God, His holies and commandments, and a true desire to defend the truth without any personal interests. Not getting angry in such cases is considered negligence in a holy duty, for which one is condemned for not witnessing to the truth, or condemned for demeaning such matters for which one cannot be quiet.

A proof for the necessity of this holy anger is the example of Moses. Although he was extremely meek and gentle, "Now the man Moses was very humble more than all men who were on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12: 3), when he saw the golden calf which the Israelites had made and worshiped, "**his anger became hot**, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder.; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it." (Exodus 32: 19,20) Moses rebuked his older brother Aaron, till Aaron begged him saying, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people that they are set on evil." (Exodus 32: 22)

Elihu, the son of Barachel, the quiet man who sat silent during the conversation of Job and his three friends justified that by his saying, "I am young in years and you are very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, 'Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'". (Job 32: 6,7) "These three men ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified

himself rather than God. And against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." (Job 32: 1-3) Elihu's anger was holy. The proof for that was that he was the only one whom God did not blame, and his speech represented the words of God.

Nehemiah, when seeing the Jews lending their brothers with interest and humiliating them, and upon hearing the cry of the people, "**I became very angry** when I heard their outcry and these words." (Nehemiah 5: 6) Then he rebuked the nobles and rulers and ordered them to stop it and have mercy on the people.

St. Paul who commanded us to behave in meekness (Ephesians 4: 2), when he was walking in Athens, "**his spirit was provoked within him** when he saw that the city was given over to idols (Acts 17: 16). He rebuked the people till they mocked him saying, "What does this babbling want to say?"

Jesus Christ Himself became angry at the Jews several times. One of the examples was when they were watching him to see if He will heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. The Bible says, "When He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts." (Mark 3: 5) Also when He entered the temple and found the merchants, "He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves, and He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple." (Mark 11: 15,16) He rebuked them saying, "Is it not written 'my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves."

All these are examples of the holy anger void of any personal interest. There are several examples from the Bible.

C) CAUSES OF EVIL ANGER

The motive for the anger may be in itself a sin. There are many examples from the Bible about this evil anger.

Some may get angry because of envy. When the Jews saw the children singing in the temple, they became angry. "But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" They were indignant and said to Him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" (Matthew 21: 15, 16) Definitely their anger was not due to holy anger when hearing the singing of the children, for at the same time they ignored the merchants selling and buying in the temple. Moreover, they left the money-changers without getting angry or zealous for the honor of the house of God. Their anger was merely due to jealousy.

Another example was what the older son did in the parable of the prodigal son. He became angry and did not want to enter, when he heard the rejoicing for the arrival of his younger brother. This was due to his envy. "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore

his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, "Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time, and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends." (Luke 15: 28, 29)

Competition may be the motive for anger. An example was when Esau became angry at Jacob who was after him twice and took from him the birthright.

Anger may be due to fear of losing any material gain, even if this loss is a spiritual gain. An example for this is Demetrius the silversmith. He became angry at SL Paul because he was afraid that through Paul's preaching, he will lose his profession. "When they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians. " (Acts 19: 28) They were angry not for religious zeal for their pagan worship, but because of material loss.

Some may become angry because one did not fulfill an evil desire for them. An example for that was the anger of Balak at Balaam, because he did not predict evil for the Israelites and did not want to insult them. The Bible says, "Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, 'I called you to curse my enemies, and look you have bountifully blessed them these three times.'" (Numbers 24:10)

Some May become angry because they can not endure the rebuke of others for their sins. For example, the Jews were angry at the Lord Jesus when He reminded them of the Gentiles who exceeded them in their relationship with God. When He told them, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout the land, but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:25-26). All those in the synagogue, when they heard these things were filled with wrath.

D) WAYS AND CONSEQUENCES OF EVIL ANGER

One may become angry and lose his politeness, meekness and temper, or even slap someone or cannot control his tongue. One may become angry and may frighten you with his looks. His face changes, his eyes glare with evil, his eyebrows are raised and his voice is high. He may even tremble and his blood pressure goes high. Many physical diseases result from that kind of anger.

All these are signs for a wrong kind of anger whereby one loses control over his nerves. Moreover, he is worse from the inside, for he is full of brutality, madness, hatred, desire to take revenge and evil. All these may appear on his lips, so he condemns others, insults, slanders and justifies himself. It may develop into fighting and killing or the desire to do that. It may end with enmity or even with complexes which settle deep in a person to the extent that he cannot

tolerate the other person. The angry person may think evil of the other person and cannot accept to hear any praise for the other person.

All these are proofs that this anger does not produce the righteousness of God. This anger contradicts the basic virtues. Therefore, St. Paul advised us saying, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31, 32) He considered gentleness, meekness, patience, and peace from the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). He called us to apply these virtues saying: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." (Colossians 3: 12, 13).

Another example of evil anger is what the Jews did when the Lord Jesus rebuked them for their sins. The Bible says, "Then all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and then they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff." (Luke 4:28,29) Another example is what Simeon and Levi did. Their father Jacob said about them, "Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hand-strung an ox." (Genesis 49:6) That is why he cursed their anger by saying, "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath for it is cruel!" (Genesis 49:7) This harshness in anger was what made Esau decide to kill his brother. (Genesis 27:43)

E) BE SLOW IN ANGER

Anger may be due to swiftness and impulsive behavior. However, if one is slow and thoroughly thinks before he gets mad, he may behave in wisdom or find a reason, or at least calms himself controls his nerves and becomes angry without sinning.

St. James advised us saying, "Let everyone be slow to speak, **slow to wrath.**" (James 1: 19) Solomon the wise said, "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger." (Proverbs 19: 11) "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly." (Proverbs 14:29) God is described as being slow to anger. (Exodus 34:6; Joel 2:13)

Therefore, flee from your wrath and thoroughly think before you get angry. Put yourself in the place of the one being angry at, trying to know how he will answer and apologize.

F) DEALING WITH ANGRY PEOPLE

Solomon the Wise said, "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go." (Proverbs 22:24) He explained this in another place by saying, "An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression." (Proverbs 29:22) Therefore, do not expose yourself to an intolerable temptation. **Do not accompany angry people nor associate with them lest you lose your inner peace or lose your peace with them.** If you are put in a situation with an angry person, try to get away from him fast, or to change the subject which caused the anger. If you start a conversation with someone and he starts getting excited, do not continue with him in that subject nor try to come out with a solution. Realize that your listener is not ready for that now, and leave him for another opportunity, when he is more quiet and ready.

Do not oppose an angry person at the moment of his bursting into anger. But remember the wisdom of Rebecca when she saw Esau's anger toward Jacob, she told Jacob, "Flee to my brother Laban in Haran, until your brother's anger turns away from you." (Genesis 27: 45) Remember what the Lord said in Isaiah, "Come my people, enter your chambers, and **shut your doors behind you hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.**" (Isaiah 26:20)

If you cannot escape, do the following:

+ **Think that this angry person may be going through difficult circumstances, whether physical, social, financial or scientific.** These circumstances may have pressured him or caused him to be annoyed psychologically. It is your duty not to burden him any more, but you have to endure him and comfort him. Maybe that person needs treatment or spiritual service from you. Perhaps God led him to your way and revealed his anger to you, so you may care for him through your patience and abundant love.

+ **Remember that this angry person is your brother.** Do not consider him an enemy, but a prey to a common enemy for both of you.

+ Examine yourself: Perhaps you are at fault and have aggravated him by your words or behavior or from a past experience with him. If you feel that is true, then blame yourself and apologize and make him feel good.

+ **Remember the sayings of the saints, "Fire cannot be put off by fire; likewise wrath cannot be put off by wrath but by love and patience."** Remember what Solomon the Wise said, "A soft answer turns away wrath." (Proverbs 15: 1) Also, "A gentle tongue breaks a bone." (Proverbs 25:15) Do not ever take revenge for yourself. St. Paul said, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." (Romans 12:19) Speak gently, quietly and kindly with angry people. Be always smiling and never become furious. The Wise Solomon raised us a higher level when he said, "A gift in secret pacifies anger." (Proverbs 21:14)

+ **Do not count the mistakes of an angry person at the moment of his wrath**, whether by his words or his behavior. Do not let any of s behavior affect you, for this is not a normal state. Be sure that will apologize for his behavior when he calms down. Ignore his stakes at the moment of his wrath.

G) SOME ADVICE

The source of anger is not always the wrong behavior of others, it may be a weak point in us. The behavior of others may not lead us to anger, but still we become angry. A drop of ink colors the water in a big container. Hence, a behavior which aggravates an angry person may not aggravate a meek person. When you become angry do not justify yourself and blame others, but rather blame yourself and struggle against the sin of anger.

It was mentioned that a monk was living in a monastery, keeping silent. However, he used to be easily angered when communicating with other brothers. He said to himself, "I will be calm and I will not become angry. He went and lived in a cave. One day he filled a pitcher with water and put it on the ground. Few minutes later, the wind blew it and the water spilled. He went and filled it again, but it spilled again. He filled it again and the same thing happened for the third time. He became angry and smashed it to the ground, so it broke. Later, when he became quiet with himself, he realized his sin and that the devils have tricked him. He said to himself, "I was defeated while in solitude, also. Let me go to the monastery again, for in every place, one needs to struggle and needs patience and help from God."

This is a preventive advice which is to train yourself for the following virtues: gentleness, patience, meekness, calmness, perseverance and love. Repeat several times the prayer which the church taught us to say in the morning prayer "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:1,2) Repeat it in your prayers especially during the times when you are tempted to become angry.

+ **Study the causes which aggravate you to become angry and try to overcome them or to avoid them.** Also, try to clear your conscience or straighten your relationship with those whom you get angry easily, or at least be cautious when you meet them or deal with them, avoiding what may aggravate you or them.

+ **If your anger is due to the irritation of your nerves or your exhaustion, or any physical reason,** then try to treat yourself, or at least do not expose yourself to any excitement while you are exhausted, or else why do you blame others and the reason for anger is inside you?

+ **Do not impose on people high standards which may be higher than their levels and treat them accordingly.** Then, if they do not follow these standards, you become angry. Do not expect that everything will go according to your own principles, opinions and ideas, for people

are different in their personalities, mentalities, spiritualities, and their points of view regarding different matters. Therefore, do not be sad if someone disagrees with you or becomes enthusiastic about a matter which you may see wrong, or if he acts in a manner which you do not like. Do not expect everyone to be a copy of you. Moreover, you cannot make them become like you, and if you think this is possible, you cannot make that by your anger or explosion.

+ If the mistakes of others are the cause of your anger, then, do not become watchful for people's actions. **Train yourself not to interfere with anything that does not concern you.** For if you keep following the mistakes of whom you meet and become angry, then you will lose your nerves and peace before correcting others and you will find what harms you and aggravates you. Be concerned with what is within your jurisdiction and with what you are responsible for in front of God and people. Correct that with the spirit of wisdom as St. James said in his epistle, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." (James 3:17)

+ **If you become angry, do not let your anger stay for a long time, but try to let it go away and calm yourself quickly.** Remember what St. Paul said, "Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26)

+ **Remember your sins in which you fall during anger and train yourself to forsake them.** Thank God that this anger has revealed to you many of your weak points and try to overcome them benefiting from every time you become angry and is provoked.

+ **Confess to God in all your prayers that you are an angry person who is easily provoked, asking God to heal you from this disease and grant you the spirit of meekness.** Be persistent in your prayers and be sure that you will receive it because God Himself wants it for you.