

Righteous Anger

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[0 : 00] I don't know if everyone has an outline. This is not different from the outline. We're going to talk about anger. Anger is one of the seven deadly sins.

We don't actually hear very much about sin in this group. Have you noticed that? We do globally. We do sort of in the abstract. But today we want to talk about sin, first person singular. So if you get embarrassed at some point, it's okay to get your money back. Somewhere in our religious past, and I think it was Pope Gregory the Great, decided that there were seven deadly sins.

And they are pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, sloth, and anger.

This list of perhaps the most objectionable vices was originally used in early Christianity to teach and educate believers about man's tendency to sin.

[1 : 12] By the 14th century, long time later, artists had long picked up this theme, and it had become popular in paintings and so on. And those in turn became teaching materials that helped to ingrain this idea of the seven deadly sins in Christian consciousness.

When I was younger, I used to say, okay, what were the seven livelier ones? But there is no mention of those on the internet. These sounded lively enough to me, actually.

But of interest to me is that the Bible does not refer to anger as a sin at all. But there are good reasons why some people thought it qualified for the deadly list.

And that will be the substance of our dialogue today. Anger, yours, mine, and God's. But first we will pray. Father God, we praise you for our creation.

And we thank you that you have deigned to make us in your image so that we might experience the great range of emotions that let us enjoy so much of life. We are also aware that some of our feelings are difficult for us to control.

[2 : 26] These are the things that lead us into sins. We need and rely upon the guidance of your Holy Spirit as we respond each day to the many assaults on our feelings.

Lead us, O God, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. The seven deadly sins are actually attitudes, not behaviors.

If you look over that list, you will realize this. They do, however, underlie actions that result from these feelings and therefore have a direct impact on our tendency to sin.

Since all sin is offensive to God, we need to understand how anger promotes sinful behavior. Anger is one of a group of words, all of which define more or less the same emotion, but with varying degrees of intensity.

Words like sarcasm, like, what did I hear today? Just the indignation. Words like irritation, and some of those might be at the milder end of the scale.

[3 : 40] And then other words that are strong, aggressive words, like rage and wrath, and those are words that do appear in the Bible fairly frequently. Anger is an emotional state, which, like other emotions, is accompanied by physiological changes.

I'm going to say that again, because it's really very basic to our reactions to anger. It's accompanied by physiological changes. When we get angry, our heart rate goes up, our blood pressure rises, as do the levels of hormones like adrenaline.

Now, you know what adrenaline does to you? It makes you ready for the battle. Anger actually has a survival dimension. That's probably why we're built this way, because these changes prepare a person for the aggressive actions which will, in the presence of an enemy, possibly save his life.

Our problem is that we have defined too many things as the enemy, and we go into fight mode when we have our parking space taken away from us, when somebody jumps the queue in the supermarket, when there is some really minor injustice, and the guy that said, don't sweat the small

stuff, needed to give us lessons in that, because we do sweat the small stuff far too often, and the blood pressure goes up, and the clenched fists, and all of the rest of it.

Anger can be sparked by internal or external events, and it is a natural adaptive response to threats and injustices, whether these are real or perceived, and that's another problem, that they aren't always real, the things that we respond to with all the stops pulled out.

[5 : 29] Let's look at somebody who did demonstrate anger early in the Bible, Cain. I'll read this bit about anger. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a worker of the ground.

In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions, and the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

So Cain was very angry, and his face fell, and the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, there's the clue to why his gift wasn't accepted.

Something wrong there, maybe not the best. If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

Its desire is for you, and you must rule over it. But Cain didn't, did he? Cain was not angry with Abel. Nowhere does it say he was.

[6 : 39] He was angry at God, who didn't accept his gift. Lots of people find it quite difficult to be angry with God. We'll talk about that a bit later. But, I mean, this was mega power compared with what Cain had, and so he was going to take on his brother instead.

And here we have hurt, pride, and jealousy bonding with anger, and in combination, they are powerful motivations towards sinful action.

Cain had projected his anger toward his brother and became a murderer. Somebody who was less successful at murder, but was also an angry man, is King Saul.

Excuse me. Sudden dehydration. Saul, as you remember, was quite fond of David and liked to hear his lyre being played, and he actually appreciated his fighting abilities.

These were the days when kings had to be able to lead armies into battle and win them, and that was the kind of person Saul was, and he had been a successful military leader.

[7 : 54] David came on the scene, and he was even more successful. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war.

And this was good in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants, bringing it closer to home. As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments.

And the women sang to one another as they celebrated. Saul had struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him.

He said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?

The next day, a harmful spirit rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre.

[9 : 02] He had a spear in his hand, and he hurled the spear, for he thought, I will pin David to the wall. But David evaded him twice. So he picked up the spear again and threw it once more.

Now, this is another example of jealousy, but there's another content to this example. Fear. Fear for his throne, his job, his position at the top of the heap in society.

This man who has done everything and more than I did, what is there left for him to want or achieve? Is he after my throne? Is that going to come next?

Will the people who have danced and sung and said he's got his ten thousands want him instead of me? Fear is a very powerful motivator, and anger attached to that is really very bad news.

Later in, and we have another, we have another Saul. I can find him. And this is the man that we have come to know as the Apostle Paul.

[10 : 09] We're introduced to him at the time of Stephen's remarkable sermon and his death by stoning. He was an observer and he heard what Stephen had to say and preach, but he approved of Stephen's execution, even though there's no evidence that he threw a stone.

And he subsequently set out to destroy root and branch the message Stephen had preached and all the Christians he could lay hands on, not just in the Jerusalem synagogues, but we read further in Acts that he went into Asia Minor and kept going after them, carrying the persecution and

imprisonment far beyond Jerusalem.

Anger had consumed this man. Why? Why was Saul angry? Well, it was because Christ's message would destroy temple worship as he knew it and the laws and customs that Moses had delivered to the Jews.

this was a major threat to him personally because this man had spent a lifetime studying his faith and was good at it, but also to his religion. In other words, if the Christians actually take over the synagogue, where will I be with all my knowledge and understanding and belief because he was a believer?

Paul, who had studied under Gamaliel, did not take that man's advice but went on a one-man crusade to preserve his faith. You will remember Gamaliel, whose advice is mentioned at least a couple of times in the Bible, but in relation to the Christian heresy, shall we call it, in the synagogues, his advice had been sought and he said, if this movement is of man, it will disappear and if it is of God, nothing you can do will stop it.

[12:02] That didn't stop Saul. He went on the rampage anyway. And this kind of anger can escalate very quickly and become a consuming passion. Here is the man who would not cast one stone at Stephen that took on the collective Stephen in the whole Christian community.

Anger is a component and sometimes a cause of depression. Great hostility, acting out behaviors which alienate those around us and make for aggressive words like sarcasm or acts like wife beating.

Action and its manifestations comprise the content of so many of our weekly TV shows. Honest to goodness, our society is really being raised on a diet of anger and none of it seems to be controlled. Have you noticed that? If you have a gun, you use it. If you have a fist, you use it. If you have a bomb, you use it. Don't try to control it is the message that we're getting on TV most of the time. But the Bible doesn't call anger a sin.

Anger is, in fact, one of the emotions that we share with our Creator. We believe in a God who is capable of great anger. That, of course, is not the whole story about God.

[13:16] But neither is the sweet little image of gentle Jesus meek and mild. That's not the whole story either. Right from the beginning, God warned us about this in giving people the law.

He said he was jealous. He said he would get angry if they didn't keep the law. But his anger and jealousy is juxtaposed throughout the Bible against his love and mercy.

He is an emotional God and we who are created in his image have been fashioned as emotional beings capable of both great anger and great compassion.

There are differences, of course, between God's anger and ours, which we'll address in a minute. But first, let's look at what the Bible says about anger. You have these references, I think, in front of you.

I'll just read them to discover what they have to tell us about anger. In Proverbs 14, we read, whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but a hasty temper exalts folly.

[14:20] Folly is the old-fashioned archaic word for madness. And if you were engaged in folly, you were a fool. Nowadays, we have a more bland meaning for it.

But from this, we learn that anger can lead us into doing really stupid things. Raise your hand if you've never done a stupid thing when you were mad. Oh, is that one at the back?

I see. I have to tell you about a recent example. At Christmas, my son gave me tickets to Cecilia Bartoli and said he would like to accompany me to the concert.

So off we went. This was about a month ago. And the place was packed. The Orpheum was full of people. When we found our seats, the man next to me was looking around underneath the seats and he said, there's a lady here that's lost her purse.

Maybe you'd help me see if we can find it. That was really the only exchange we had before the concert started. He was a little restless in his seat, but all of us get restless in the Orpheum seats.

[15:25] You know, they're pretty pathetic. And in the intermission, he stood up, turned around, looked at the lady sitting behind him and said, you have hit me in the neck three times with your program and I would like you to stop that.

Well, she was totally nonplussed and flustered and she said, oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know, but I don't think it was four times, maybe only a couple.

And she didn't get to the end of the sentence before he boomed in with, it's four times and you are going to stop it. First, escalation. The first one was a request, the second one was a command.

This guy is getting hot under the collar. Well, then they were into it. She was trying to defend herself, he was attacking. Conversation stopped all around this little incident.

His wife, who was sitting on the other side of him, was studying the paintings on the ceiling of the Orpheus. She was trying to memorize them and pretending she didn't know who this man was.

[16:32] And finally, somebody else got into the act and the next voice I heard was, now see here, you can't talk to my daughter that way.

The man sitting next to the lady under attack was apparently her father. Well, finally, the aggressive man decided he was going to go and get another seat.

And as he pushed past me to get to the aisle, he said, I suppose she thinks it's alright to do that to an American. Very, very important sentence.

And I said to him, she didn't know you were an American and neither did I. Now, what's your best guess about where this feeling came from, this terrific aggression that escalated before our very eyes?

It was also the escalation of something that had happened to him previously. Nationality did not come into this in any way at all. Somebody else had made him feel an injustice of some kind where nationality was important or at least mentioned.

[17:38] So that anger was not properly dealt with and he dragged it into yet a new situation. I'm getting the back of my neck, all whatever. and he attached his Americanism to this.

It was quite ridiculous, really, but it was interesting that I had this example while I was preparing this talk because you could not ask for a better example of folly, could you?

There was no reason to handle the situation that way. And he seemed to be provoked by everything that she said to try and make it come out right.

And how he got another seat in an auditorium that was packed, I really don't know, but he did not come back to the seat next to me. Okay, returning to Proverbs 16, this idea of doing stupid things is expanded.

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Who takes a city?

[18:40] What an odd expression to put in there. Who takes a city? We don't use that expression very much anymore, but it is the conqueror who takes the city. And it really means that's when the enemy capitulates, and you can have your little triumphal march, or big triumphal march.

So here we are. It's an odd comparison, except that it tells us that anger can be controlled, and in fact overcome, in the same way that someone who conquers a city can overcome the enemy.

There are good reasons for trying to contain anger. There are many people that have trouble with anger, and it quickly gets beyond their control, and it's very frightening when that happens to people, when they can feel it escalating.

And bear in mind that all of this is fueled by biology. Our physiology is fueling this. I mean, the blood pressure is up, right? The adrenaline is there.

And somehow or other, that has to be discharged. But it is a frightening feeling for many people when they can feel the anger getting worse and worse, and they don't know what to do about it.

Some years ago, when I was a social worker working in child protection, which is definitely a hard hat part of social work, and getting worse by the day, I would think.

[20:01] It's not an area I would ever go back to in working. But I liked crisis intervention, and I was good at crisis intervention. And if you ever get into a crisis, try and remember that, because I usually don't go to pieces until the crisis is all over.

Then I can indulge how I really felt. But I was called out to see an apartment manager who said, she's locked me out of the apartment and she's doing something bad to that child.

Well, when I got there, it took me half an hour to talk my way into the apartment, and there I found a lady in the midst of a schizophrenic meltdown, who was taking the toilet apart with a hammer, and there was concern about what she would do to this little toddler, although she had not yet harmed him.

But I knew I had to get her out of there and get her to help, and then get him to help as well. So I bundled them into the car and took them to the West End Community Mental Health Team, which at that time had offices in St. Andrews Wesley Church, where they have built that new residence, and walked into the door and saw something quite intriguing on the floor.

Right inside the door, they had something about the size of a bath mat that had written on it tantrum mat. And I thought, oh, you have to get over your tantrum before you get to the psychiatrist's office, is that it?

[21 : 31] And so I did think that at the time, but afterwards I thought, this is a good idea. This is a place that limits where the tantrum will happen, even if it did go on into the psychiatrist's office.

tantrum mat. And some years later, when I became a mother and had a little son who was being taught tantrums by Peter, his friend next door, how to do it, how to really get up mother's nose, I went to a big box store and got a sample carpet and brought it home and I said, this is going to be our tantrum mat.

You can have it all to yourself, but mommy will use it if necessary. And so when he was feeling angry and upset about something, I said, the mat is the place to do this and he could stomp around, wave his fist, yell and holler, and when he stopped doing that, he left the mat.

Now it sounds like a funny example, but helping people who are out of control with anger to develop some kind of offense around that is extremely helpful and that may happen to you sometime in the presence of friends and you can tell when anger is getting beyond their control.

And try to remember that this is just as frightening for them as it is for you. Sometimes it can be contained by space in the case of the tantrum mat and sometimes it can be contained with words.

[23 : 04] There are various ways of reducing the area over which the anger will spill. Because if it goes beyond the mat or wherever the field of containment is, then it's into the house, it's on to other people, it may even get outside to the neighborhood.

The anger keeps building. Okay, back to the psalm. In Psalm 4 we find this injunction, be angry and do not sin.

They don't say how to do that. Don't you really wish that Psalms and Proverbs and some of those things would tell us the how, not just the what. This is a reminder of course to beware of anger's sinful bedfellows and to avoid them.

Let's switch to the New Testament. In Ephesians 4 we are told, do not let the sun go down on your anger. Now this is a very useful instruction to us in that we must deal with anger when we become aware of it, lest it be allowed to escalate or take up residence in our hearts and minds.

Get rid of it as soon as you can. Get it out of your system. Get the blood pressure back to where it belongs, 120 over 80 or whatever, and reduce those feelings in yourself.

[24 : 25] And sometimes, well you can be taught ways of doing this, I'll mention those in a minute. But most of us don't get angry to the point where we feel we need immediate help all the time.

Have a look for a moment at the back of your sheet. Now if you Google something like anger scale on the internet you will find a variety of them.

This is one that I have just taken bits and pieces from. Where's my copy? I haven't got it. Oh, thanks.

The people who do the MMPI, which is a very fancy psychological test, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, they have been studying anger along with other kinds of personality things for so long that they are now fine tuning it to anger of women in prison, anger in teenage girls, anger in Turkish drivers.

Yes, it's there. So they may have started with an anger scale, but they're now looking at how to apply this to different population groups and so on. Now, this Dr. Snell is a psychologist who has developed this one.

[25 : 52] I have just taken samples out of it. He has 21 groups. Each of them has four choices. There is a self-marking method on the internet so that you can find out where on the scale your anger adds up to and whether or not you should do something about it.

And you don't have to tell a soul and I won't ask you what the score was. But in each of these sections, the anger is escalating. Look at number six.

I don't feel that others are trying to annoy me. At times, I think people are trying to annoy me. More people than usual are beginning to make me feel angry.

I feel that others are constantly and intentionally making me angry. We're developing a persecution complex as we go through this. They're doing it to me.

They're doing it to me often. They're doing it to me on purpose. This is why you should deal with this before sunrise the next morning. It is really easy for these feelings to take hold and, as I say, take up residence in our hearts and minds.

[27 : 06] Number nine deals with something more physical. I don't feel angry enough to hurt someone. Yeah, I'm mad, but I wouldn't actually sock him in the jaw. Sometimes I am so angry that I feel like hurting others, but I wouldn't really do it.

My anger is so intense that I sometimes feel like hurting others, but they still haven't done it. D, I am so angry that I would like to hurt someone. Now there's a time bomb waiting to go off.

And each of these shows the escalation. If you discharge the anger somehow when you're at level A, it isn't going to get that bad. Okay, James, we'll go on to hymn.

We find in James, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

Oh, wow. Anger, then, leads us away from a godly life. It is an inducement to sin, even though it may not be a sin in itself.

[28 : 14] Our emotions really don't have good or bad moral components to them. It's what we do with them that makes them good or bad. All of these biblical references contain good advice, but they are not easily remembered when the pulse is racing and your adrenal gland is preparing you to fight.

Each of us needs to learn what pushes our buttons, our angry buttons, and then to deal with our anger in the least harmful way to ourselves or others. What happens when anger escalates is what you have seen in Dr.

Snell's list, that somebody is getting ready to explode more each time there is another incident.

Usually, they don't follow that pattern unless there are further things that make people angry.

If it's one incident, it never happens again. You don't necessarily expect the anger to go away, but you don't expect its intensity to increase. But like the man in the Orpheum, there was a previous incident.

We know that from the thing he said, maybe even more than one. He didn't get the point of using his fists. words. And in number six, I think it is, I feel that others are constantly and intentionally making me angry.

[29 : 47] You see what's happening to the responsibility here. In A, there is no suggestion of victimization. In D, there is a suggestion that other people are doing this intentionally.

Now, unless we take responsibility for anger, we're not going to do anything about it. If you say, it's them, not me, then you are in serious trouble. And that's a temptation.

I mean, we always want to blame someone else, don't we? Not to dwell on the psychology here.

There are anger management techniques that can be learned and used. And there are groups in the city that teach it, everything from night school to family service agencies and so on.

There are a lot of people trying to deal with their anger. I once worked with a doctor who was a very fine Christian. Everybody loved him.

He was a great surgeon. And we thought that he was aggressive on the soccer field, but we didn't ever know that he had been a wife beater and that this had actually destroyed his marriage.

[30 : 52] marriage. Now, he had a constant battle with anger. He needed to play more soccer, I think. You know, I mean, isn't this one way that we discharge these feelings?

In games and contests of various kinds. And the more physical they are, football and soccer and stuff like that, probably the better it is. But he had a lifelong struggle with anger.

And he'd been to the classes and everything, and he knew what a devastating effect it had on his family life. But he had a dreadful time controlling that. Anyway, if you're interested in these classes, they start with sort of calming devices, how to talk yourself down.

Don't sweat the small stuff. That kind of thing is talking yourself down. This is small, is what you're telling yourself. Save the heat and the anger for the biggie. And moving up the scale to cognitive restructuring and redirecting anger.

And that's all I'm going to say about the psychology of that. It is common for people to want to lash out physically, and your body's reactions promote this. Banging the desk is popular with people who have desks, offices, whatever.

[32 : 07] Actually, we used to have jokes, cartoons I think they were, where the boss hollers at the man who's under his supervision, and he can't holler back, so he comes home and chews out the wife.

And she castigates the child, and the child kicks the cat. You know, it kind of ricochets. That really isn't funny, but if you have a desk to bang on, go ahead.

There is a story, possibly apocryphal, about Abe Lincoln's mother, who was once so angry with him that she threw a cup into the fireplace and broke it. Now, this was a major loss in a household with few of this world's goods.

And we all know the stories about little Abe studying law by candlelight in that little cabin, you know. So a cup was a major loss. When she realized this, she took control of her anger and said to him, who are you that I should break a cup over you?

She put the whole incident into the right perspective herself. Now, Moses did something that got rid of his anger when he came down from the mountain with the tablets of the law, found his people worshipping a god they had made from the gold they had brought out of Egypt.

[33 : 20] He probably wanted to break the tablets over Aaron's head because this was the priestly figure in this group, right? And he had not prevented this from happening. But he discharged his anger in a less harmful way.

He hit the calf. Good for him. You know, there is a reason why psychiatric units commonly contain a punching bag. Maybe you didn't know that.

I mean, it's not out there by the front desk. But it's often in the exercise room. And, you know, sometimes people really need to do that.

I can remember being quite angry with my husband once when we were cabin building up at Keats Island. And we organized work very differently and we had never tried to work.

Aha! You know what I mean. We had never actually tried to work on a same project like this before in our lives. So I finally threw up my hands and said, you know, I can't sort of wait for you to decide about every little piece of this.

[34 : 20] Assign me something and let me get on with it. So he assigned me nailing tar paper on the wooden part of the outside prior to the insulation and so on.

So I got a hammer and nails and tar paper and for three hours I banged away at that and I felt great by the end of it. And I knew exactly what had happened.

The tar paper was up and the anger was gone. Sometimes you may need to get away from the situation or person who is provoking the anger in you.

This is common sense. It is not a flight mechanism. Some years ago as a social worker I'll go back to child welfare for a minute. And I was dealing with neglected, abused, abandoned children and families in conflict with their kids.

Then I was away from it for about three years after I became a mummy and I returned to part-time work when my son was three. But two things had changed during my absence.

[35 : 29] The government policy had changed to place emphasis on helping people be better parents and motherhood had changed me. As a way of doing that I gather from stories my friends tell.

I began to lose the objectivity that had enabled me to be helpful in tragic and terrible situations. emotions. I began to feel the pain of the children on my caseload.

The five-year-old boy locked out of his home begging for food in the lane behind London drugs on Broadway. The baby not yet crawling who had purple bruises all over his torso and a dislocated shoulder.

shoulder. You know what it takes to dislocate a baby's shoulder? A lot of strength. I saw my child's face on that baby.

I couldn't do it. I knew I was in trouble. The 14-year-old girl whose father was pimping her to his friends. They could take Linda upstairs as long as they gave her two dollars.

[36 : 38] Did you know there were parents like this in the world? In our city? The four-year-old girl rescued by the police from the Commodore Hotel where her screams had alerted the neighbors.

Covered with bruises on arms and legs and a wheel on the inside of her left thigh where a cigarette had been ground out in that little body. She was not able to communicate in anything but a whimper and it was weeks before we discovered that her parents had sold her to the man who was sexually abusing her.

Now I'm sure that you're appalled by these illustrations but you weren't there. having to talk to Linda's father and the abuser of the little four-year-old girl.

I was and I can tell you that helping them become better parents was the last thing on my mind. I wanted to put them through the paper shredder. I did not know until that moment that I was capable of such rage as I began to feel.

My toes were tingling. The palms of my hands were hot and I knew I was in real danger. In danger of doing great harm to the abusers of little children. Something that would wreck my career, not be helpful, and that I would regret for the rest of my life.

[38 : 03] I had to remove myself from that kind of work. So I went to my boss and said, I can't do this. And she said, good for you that you knew that yourself without being told.

That was nice of her. I said, I need to work with a different population. So she assigned me to work with troubled teenagers who were running away from home, which was certainly a change. And leaving the field in that kind of situation is a smart thing to do. It is not a sign of failure or cowardice. If you are the first person to discover that you can't handle it, good for you. Good for you. Don't wait till somebody else says, something's going wrong with your work here, you know? So anger is a dangerous companion leading us away from the righteous life. Is that what makes God angry? Well, the Old Testament is sprinkled with references to God's anger, all related to clear and persistent themes. You probably have your favorites.

[39 : 09] Here are a few of them. Deuteronomy. You shall not go after other gods, for the Lord is in your midst, a jealous God, lest the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he will destroy you from the earth.

You know, we sometimes treat God's law as if it's the Ten Suggestions, not the Ten Commandments. He took them seriously.

We need to take them seriously, too. Joshua. The anger of the Lord burned against Israel because they disobeyed and broke the covenant. Isaiah.

The anger of the Lord was kindled against his people because they rejected his word and despised his law. We know all about that. That's what our society is doing. Where is Isaiah when we need him?

Well, actually, he is with us, sort of. Jeremiah. Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods? You have not humbled yourselves, nor feared, nor walked in my law and statutes.

[40 : 24] And Nahum. We never get, poor Nahum never gets quoted, so I put him in. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can test the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and rocks are broken into pieces by him.

So God reacts physically, or at least that is the image that we're given, that God doesn't contain his anger against us. And you get the point of this.

It all has a relationship to, if I'm going to be your God, you have to do what I want you to do. Failure to be faithful in this results in sin, and sin is what angers God.

Actually, Jesus echoed this, you know, when he said to his disciples, Do not call me Lord, if you do not the things I have commanded you.

Now that must have been hard for them to hear, because they were trying to get it right, I think. I once heard sin described as missing the mark.

[41 : 30] Hope I've got this Greek word right. Hamartia, I think, is the Greek word for sin, and it was described to me as missing the mark. And in my view, it is much too bland a meaning to assign to sin.

It is rather like missing the target in a game or contest. The thing that I usually think of when somebody says missing the mark is, you know, picking up a bow, knocking the arrow, pulling back the string, letting it go, and lo and behold, it hits the butt some inches away from the bullseye. Oh, bad luck. Try another arrow. Better luck next time. That's not what sin is like, nor is the consequence of sin like that.

So I think it's too bland a word. If we really understood God's deep abhorrence of sin, we would cling to the cross for dear life, thanking Christ for giving us a way back into God's favor.

We will probably understand only a fraction of God's anger towards sin, but it is sometimes a bigger problem for people who feel angry toward God.

[42 : 43] This feeling is troubling for Christians as well as for non-believers. It's amazing how many people who call themselves atheists are hoping that God will come to their rescue in some situation.

You know, whoever it was said there are no atheists in a lifeboat, had it right, because you can abandon atheism fairly quickly if you think that there is a way of being helped. When desperate and troublesome situations take place in our lives, it's reasonable to look for someone to blame for Armand's fortunes.

Didn't we find that on Snell's outline? God is often the object of such blame, because we have the expectation that an all-powerful God could have given us a better outcome, or at the very least an answer to the questions why, or why me.

Joke didn't get very far with that. Did you notice that God said, I'm the one that asked the questions? Whoops. But this is not at all unreasonable.

We, you know, we're rational people. We want a rational explanation for what's going on in our lives. And, of course, anger is a part of a lot of bad things that happen to us. People that get a terminal diagnosis, people who have lost a loved one, it's part of the trajectory of feelings that usually both those groups of people routinely go through.

[44 : 06] Depression and anger are a part of what happens. And in that sense, it's normal, but they don't have to stay there. In fact, most of them don't.

It is usually a time of testing for the quality of our relationship with God. And the resolution to that problem will probably be in the quality of that relationship.

If you're a person who has ignored God for a lot of years, then you don't really know the kind of God that you are dealing with when tragedy happens. In the case of my Scottish grandfather, who built the Presbyterian Church in Cranbrook, and lost his third child at age three from gastroenteritis, which in those days they called summer complaint, he stopped believing in, quote, a God who could do that to a small child.

In the case of my cousin, his grandchild, who lost her husband because of an accident during surgery, the outcome was different. Chuck had about two weeks to say his goodbyes, but he knew that his life was ending as a result of this accident.

And nobody knew it was an accident until his son said, I want to see the medical record. And that, of course, brings a lot of anger to the fore because it's legitimate. This isn't a perceived threat.

[45 : 34] This really did happen. After several months of depression following Chuck's death, she was encouraged by one of her Anglican friends to go to a retreat. There is a retreat house of some kind in the Kelowna area.

And bereaved and grieving people are often helped by things like this. And she was one. And after she told me, I thought I was mad at the doctors who were responsible for that surgery.

But you know what I found out there? I was also angry with Chuck because he didn't try hard enough to live. And I was also angry with God because he could have saved Chuck's life.

And that is really why a lot of people who have this sort of tragedy are mad at God. But, you know, God isn't the genie in the bottle that always does things the way we want them to do.

We rub it and he will answer, yes, master, to us. No, no. It's the other way around. He is our master. Even though my cousin's expectations of God were not fulfilled, it was a time of great intimacy with God in this self-discovery and learning more about God and more about herself.

[46 : 46] And it deepened her understanding of herself. It has not destroyed her faith or her relationship with God. It is okay to be angry with God.

Somebody once said to me, you think you can defend God when people get angry with him? He's able to do that for himself. It's presumptuous for you to think that you could defend God was good advice.

You are not going to be hit by a bolt of lightning if you are angry with God. But as Job discovered, you are not necessarily going to get an answer. I have a list of questions I'm working on for when I get to heaven.

And I know other people that have done this and most of them start with why. Because we do like to have answers to things. When I was working in the hospital, I talked with many people experiencing life and death situations that made them examine often a faith that they may not have given much attention to.

It's kind of a standing joke between my department and pastoral care that the social workers got the lapsed Catholics that had spiritual concerns and the nuns got the lapsed Protestants.

[47 : 53] And I said, why is that? And the answer was clear, but never having been a Catholic, I didn't know what it was. These are the people that taught them the catechism when they were in school.

They all had been in Catholic schools where there was a course in religion and it was the teachers who were nuns that taught that. Nowadays, I think they probably do that in the parish.

But here were these people that had kind of forgotten whatever since their first communion, which happens at about age six or seven, and had had no recent contact with God or the faith or even the church, who suddenly wanted to talk about what was going on in the spiritual side of their lives.

And the Protestants were people that were still praying, now I lay me down to sleep, and hadn't kind of gone beyond that and wanted to do it better, wanted to do it better.

I found the Psalms of David, the angry ones, quite helpful when I was working in that area. Now, I'm going to mention a book, and I don't even know if it's in print, but I think you may know it. I had three little books that had been translated into paraphrase of the Psalms.

[49 : 06] One dealt with angry Psalms, Good Lord, Where Are You?, and one dealt with celebratory ones, that God is here, let's celebrate, and there was one in the middle. I lost two copies of the angry ones.

I gave one to one of the nuns and never got it back. I gave another one to one of the nuns who said, Oh my dear, it was so good, I passed it on to so-and-so, and I thought, Well, it's got a good home, I guess I shouldn't worry.

But Leslie Brandt's book has since been published with those three together, as far as I know, and I think it's called Psalms Now, you check with Regent Bookstore and see.

David had no difficulty expressing anger, disappointment, frustration to God, but he usually managed to get past that feeling into the remembrance of God's love and faithfulness time and time again.

And we could all take a lesson from him. We've got time to read one of these, Bill, one little one.

Okay. This is Psalm 6.

[50 : 12] Oh Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, oh Lord, for I am languishing.

Heal me, oh Lord, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, oh Lord, how long? Turn, deliver my life.

Save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you. In Sheol, who will give you praise?

Good point. I am weary with my moaning. Every night I flood my bed with tears. I drench my couch with my weeping. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.

The Lord has heard my plea. The Lord accepts my prayer. All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled. They shall then turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

[51 : 15] Now, he manages to work from the anger and the disappointment and whatever always through to some way of praising God and finding that helpful to him.

And it is in the remembrance of our other experiences with God that that sometimes happens. It doesn't hurt at all to keep reminding ourselves of that. Where does anger fit then in the repertoire of our emotions, bearing in mind that we are all emotional people who value the feelings the Creator has given us?

Ideally, as new creatures in Christ, living that new life out, we would apply ourselves to the advice that Paul gave to the Colossians.

Which was... Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you.

Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. Sounds a lot like the seven deadly sins, doesn't it? He describes these as idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming.

[52 : 31] In these you too once walked, but now you must put them all away. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.

Now, if there's one thing that annoys me about Paul, this is the guy that said, Be ye therefore perfect. It is that he always sets a standard that we could not possibly live up to on our own.

Fortunately, we do not have to live up to it on our own. We have a constant helper in the Holy Spirit, and we should continue to use that resource.

It is unlikely that we can eliminate anger from our lives, nor is it wise to try to suppress it. Suppress it for the moment, yes, but don't make a habit of this. It will be dangerous to you.

[53 : 31] There is an alternative way to deal with anger that is directed toward positive outcomes, and that is to redirect the physical and emotional energy associated with angry feelings.

Now, anger is different from every other quality mentioned on that deadly list in one respect, and this is it. It is not necessarily associated with selfishness or self-interest, and I think you will find that all the others are.

So this means that there can be positive outcomes from our angry feelings. The threats and injustices which provoke anger need not be taken personally.

Secondly, when we identify strongly with the injustice of others, our angry energy can be put to positive uses. You know, everybody that takes up causes, they are angry people.

Think of Maude Barlow, who has a nice quiet voice, but, you know, goes for the jugular just the same. Think of Stephen Lewis, who is extreme anguish, in a way, and anger over what's happening with AIDS in Africa and the inability or unwillingness of nations to respond appropriately to that.

[54 : 47] That's what he's done with his anger. Martin Luther was an angry man. He even told us that. Now, he was angry because of the distortion of biblical truth being practiced by the papacy and misleading the Christian flock, which was what John Tetzal was up to.

He was not initially in any personal danger. Later on, he was. But he directed his energy toward bringing about a change.

Martin Luther King was an angry man who redirected his anger about the injustices suffered by black people into leading a crusade for human rights that may well be on a par with Moses leading the Hebrews to the Promised Land.

He saw that his anger could bring about change for the common good. These are examples of righteous anger, that is, anger directed toward making things right.

Reformers all tend to be angry people. Just look at all the reformers in, for instance, social and human services in the 19th century. Wilberforce, Octavia Hill, John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, all of those people were angry about what they saw in society and put their angry energy to work for good and to bring about positive change.

[56 : 09] And you can do this too. This is an option available to us all. If you put your anger at God's disposal and ask him to guide you to a suitable outlet, he will make sure that whatever you do in word and deed, you are doing it in the name of Jesus and to his glory.

Well, I've given you a lot of things to argue about. Are you going to? Phil?

Phil, you pointed to two sources, at least of that anger, mainly pride and fear. Yes. Are there others, and which of these was maybe the most important for us?

Oh, and I was thinking it might be a simple question. Okay. I think if we look at what we perceive as a threat, that you will find what those other things are.

And this is really quite individual. Well, let's say, do we have some Shakespeare fans here by any chance?

[57 : 43] I was thinking of using an example from Othello, where everybody talks about, you know, jealousy, the green-eyed monster that was infecting Othello, but it infected somebody else first, and that was Iago, who had been passed over as being a leader of the troops, and the job was given to, I think, Cassio.

And so he set about looking for revenge. And revenge is an angry reaction that is usually based on this strong feeling of injustice.

Rather than threat, Iago was in no great threat. Most people are not in threat of life and limb. It is that something has not seemed right to them or fair.

And we all have that happen to us, as I say, even somebody who grabs your parking space. And that gets worse. I mean, life batters us with a lack of fairness, you know?

That's why we go around asking questions like, why? Nobody promised us a rose garden. We are not living in Eden. We are living in an imperfect world. And getting back to your question about other things, I mentioned fear.

[58 : 53] I mentioned jealousy. I mentioned, what was the first one? Pride. Pride, yes. I think you can look at the other deadly sins.

Lust might be an exclusion. I'm not sure. Lust is, incidentally, the only one that's mentioned in the seven deadly sins that Jesus characterized as an action of sorts.

If you feel this in your heart, it is the same as if you had done the deed. That's not true of any of the other ones. Anybody else got an answer for Phil? No, I just have a question.

How would you categorize Jesus' anger in the temple? That was righteous anger for the same reason that God gets angry. That it was a disservice to the worship of God, what was happening there.

You're dishonoring my temple. Yes. God's temple. Yes. So there's a selfishness in it too, isn't it? Selfishness? Oh. To some degree. So God is being characterized as selfish in certain circumstances.

[60 : 05] Boy, I'm going to have to think about that one. But Jesus was also angry. I'm just asking. Yes. Okay. I would say that he was doing what God would have done in that, taking on temple worship that had been badly distorted.

The other time, there was a time when he healed somebody and the Pharisees took him to task about that. And again, he was looking at the outcome that God would have wanted.

And what he was encouraging people to do, of course, throughout his ministry was look at the spirit of the law, not the letter. And the letter will lead you astray. But I think in the same way that God poured out his wrath in the Old Testament, Jesus let go with his wrath in the temple.

Very similar. And since Jesus is God, that was okay for him to do. Who else? Yes. Yes, Isabel. When you talk about the 14-year-old girl, it would be any of these children that are so in the system. I mean, how do you deal with that rage? That's not, that's righteous anger.

[61 : 16] It's total and utter righteous rage. But how do these children learn? You know, that's where our humanity comes in that is so broken.

It's practically impossible. How do the children learn what? Well, how do they deal? It's like the girls How do they recover from it? Oh, absolutely. Yes. There is, you know, so, this question of anger and rage, we speak about it biblically, but because human beings are so cruel at times, to other people, to other people that are the recipient of that cruelty and to that degree in children, how do they ever deal with that rage?

You know, it's not of a, I guess, it's just such a huge issue in our society today.

It is. We can learn how to deal with this sort of anger. It's not, that simple. Well, Linda did not, did not on the surface of it, feel angry about this.

She had suppressed those feelings to the point where she was an object. She had been, she objectified herself in the way that men were objectifying her.

[62 : 41] But I think Christina wants to answer your question. Do you, Christina? necessarily, I think, a suggestion is that perhaps we, Sheila, you'll be great at doing that.

Maybe we can tackle in another thought forgiveness. And, and also, that sometimes we forget that the judgment of us is up to God, not to us.

we are here to act as God's preachers, to seek peace and love and to heal.

And we're not here to judge. And that is the true forgiveness. It's not to say, I am not going to have feelings about that. It's to say, I am going to have feelings about that in an appropriate way.

And yet, moving on from there, taking the scriptures in what is it that I can do or we can do as a society. And so, sometimes, that edge of judgment that we feel we have the right to be the one slain about this, and it actually arrives to nothing.

[63 : 58] It does not be fair. The only thing that we fear is that that we transform our lives into that passion to prepare and to see you have it.

And we don't do that on our own. And I'm not talking about therapy here. I'm talking about God working through this with you and you really have to work at that with Him.

I heard in my sister's church about two years ago a testimony from a husband and wife who were missionaries in Nigeria and had been attacked by some people out of control.

It's hard to remember who is fighting whom in Nigeria sometimes. she had been raped by several of these people. Her husband had been brutally attacked blinded in one eye and had broken limbs in an attempt partly to defend her and they came home for treatment and so on.

And they had learned to forgive the people that had done that to them and were going back to Nigeria. now that's not the work of man that's the work of God anybody who could actually go back and you know there was a strong suggestion that she might have developed HIV from this kind of attack that she suffered she was going anyway.

[65 : 22] The lady was attacked in the bathtub in Kenya I think it was who was also going back to the mission field. It's hard for us to understand this because we can't seek that kind of help from human beings.

There are people who will you know deal with victims of torture and all kinds of these assaults that we have been talking about and they can go so far with that but real healing only comes from our Savior.

Yeah. Who's at the back? Yeah. You've focused a lot on the individual aspects of our anger but all the examples reflect that it is an interaction with another person or action.

Therefore there's mutual necessity for recognition and yes we have to recognize the anger that we have but do you not think that real healing only comes when the other source the other half of the cause of the anger is take the responsibility as well.

I'm thinking I have a friend who's a lawyer and she's working in mediation and bringing together victims with you know their the person that's victimized them and helping them work together to resolve it.

[66 : 58] In each other's shoes see each other's viewpoint and from that she is seeing real healing. Do you think there's more than just the individual inside myself I must deal with my anger and there's a bigger picture in seeing the other person's side and some remorse or some recognition of fault?

Well again we're into judgment if we're talking about it as fault and I think that some people who intentionally provoke anger in somebody else that would be true and it might even be helpful to do that but very often we attach a meaning to the thing that has happened that is our perception of it it may not actually be real and in that case there would not be much point in having two people sit down and you say you made me angry you know if you had a transactional analyst kind of person they would say oh no you have to take your own anger I didn't make you angry the anger is yours I maybe did this thing but the anger is yours and they would be right to some extent it's also a buck passing kind of reaction that has been quite popular with that form of therapy now and then but it's the perception and remember I said it was a real or perceived injustice or threat it is the perception of the person who gets angry that we have no control over and may not involve another person at all is the interpretation they have placed on the action somebody behind you wants to comment yes I'm sorry I don't know your name I read a book recently which helped shed some light on this what you were talking about this last person was sort of old testament restititional law where there are two parties who have faulted one another but that's different from so many things that we face in the world and this book was about a woman who had survived the Rwandan genocide through the most unbelievable circumstances and she maintained her faith and in the end had helped to write this book but the title said it all lived to tell in other words she felt God had taken her through this disgusting political thing where there wasn't anyone that she could solve a problem with it was a huge social method but God took her through that so that she could tell the world what was going on in her life so that that was the case where what might have been anger was really now directed toward telling the world about what was going on yes very good point and she had rationalized it in her own mind as being something that could have a good outcome even though it had been a very bad experience and recognized all along that God had a hand yes thank you for bringing that up Bill it's a strange thing about God isn't it we attribute him with the attribute of knowing everything right right all knowing during in our hymns right and yet we seem to catch him by surprise it makes him angry I know you can't explain this but and that's why you brought it up it's a strange thing but he does get angry about things we attribute that he knows it's going to happen anything very much like prophecy that Jesus would be consumed by the zeal for his father's house and then he drives out the money lenders and the people out of the temple in anger it seems and but no surprise couldn't have been a surprise no he certainly knew they were doing that and chose his moment about when to do it

I suppose what I think in the back of my mind and I know it isn't going to satisfy you Bill is that there is this piece of optimism in God that rather hopes we will surprise him by doing things right I mean he loves us so why wouldn't he feel that we were worth saving you know and going on with something better yeah Betty you posed the question how do we deal with that yes for me it drives me to repentance and it drives me to prayer and prayer comes the spirit within and the Lord's prayer actually says forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and anger is part of that but the fact is that I don't think we're obligated to believing that we have to get apologies from those who do trespass against us our part in that is to pray for them that their spirit will take that on that they will come to repentance themselves that's my belief in that that's a very helpful note on which to end but

[72 : 58] I'm seeing another hand in the front row here we got time yes all hands are important here your comment I just had a comment about things that happen in our thoughts and some reality and Jesus says that if you're angry at your brother you are murdered from your brother and I was wondering if you have some thoughts about that anger well you probably have murdered him in your head if you are angry to that extent just as I was angry and wanting to put people through the paper shredder that would of course have resulted in their death we had one big enough so you're saying that resolving anger leads you into a different kind of sin no no what I'm saying is as you mentioned that Jesus says adultery in your mind is already a sin so Jesus also says about anger that even if you're angry and maybe don't do anything about that you're already on the path of murder your brother

I mean if it's not righteous anger in terms of you know something like that but if it's an anger in human terms that when I reflect on that I realized at some point that in a way because we're all connected in this somehow and we can affect each other that I thought that even even a small anger that directed another person it might not seem like a murderer but it's actually sort of we desire the less of light for that person and then it just makes me realize that how our thoughts and even words so they make an effect even if they're small and we need to really be mindful about how we relate to other people and really be especially with anger to pray about that if it's righteous I think it's very rare that it's righteous thank you for that

I think you mentioned two things that I would relate to one is the verbal exchanges in which this might happen and frequently that's directed toward diminishing the other persons without killing them sarcasm is a good example of that and often we think of that as wit you know not that we are actually hurting somebody else but our desire really in choosing that form of expressing anger is to diminish the other person and that's a way that we would think of as winning whatever the contest was a lot of these sins are not directed at win-win thank you yeah Gregory Pope Gregory the Great I don't know when he lived possibly 4th century I mean he was early and I believe that he may have gotten wind of them from something of those lists that St.

Paul gives us he gives us some that are really ghastly you know I mean he goes into it right down to the last possible sin you could think of and the 7 how it got truncated to 7 I don't know but oh the sacred number thank you thank you I forgot that boil it down to 7 thank you Sheila because so share bright Thank you.