

A Biblical Perspective Of Anger

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[0 : 0 0] I I I I I I'm going to talk to you about anger and in order to do Harry I I I In order to do that I want I want you to turn in your imagination because I gather that's all you have at the moment is to Genesis chapter 4 where there is one of the sort of primeval stories of the scriptures and it's a it says this now Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain saying I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord and so in the normal and well-ordered progression of things along comes the first child of the first couple and his name is Cain she bore his brother

Abel so that's number two Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground in the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and 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 you get the picture here of of the two men one who was Cain the older and one was Abel the younger and they both came to a point where it was time for them to make up their mind I had a lovely young lady in to see about getting married yesterday and the one thing that she had firmly in mind that she was not going to get married in church and could I help her?

which and so I said why don't you get married in church and she said well I don't go to church for one thing and the other thing is that I've been married to church and the other thing is that I've gone to church too much in my life already I went to a private school and the form of punishment they had at that private school was to give you the Bible and tell you to memorize the following passages and so religion for me is mostly punishment and therefore I don't want to have anything to do with it I don't like it I don't believe in it and that was fine and I said well I'm quite sympathetic with what you say the difficulty is that all you've told me so far is what you don't believe tell me now what you do believe you know and how you propose to establish a marriage relationship on the basis of what you do believe rather than just a reaction to what you don't believe and so we had a long and fruitful discussion on that subject now I say that because this is the kind of point that Cain and Abel come to and they come to the point where they make an offering to God they try and establish a relationship the offering is an attempt to establish the relationship and so Cain makes the offering of the things that he's grown which is the the he was he was a dirt farmer really and so he offered that and and

Abel offered the lamb and the Lord said to Abel that's fine and to Cain that's unacceptable and God has been in trouble ever since I mean basically that's the story and the reason that God is in trouble is because and and this is a very difficult story I mean it I think it's tantalizingly difficult because every group you tell this story to even from public school age kids become very indignant with God for refusing Cain's offering and it turns out to be God's fault that he does this God is not allowed to determine the basis on which he's going to relate to somebody that's got to be done he's got to he's got to accept the terms that he's offered and most people still live with that profound basic human instinct is that when it comes to relating to God it's got to be on my terms or not at all and that that is that's what most of us believe and when we get to that point in our lives where God says not at all there's no relationship then that that that brings about the anger and the anger is the question that we're looking at right here well you remember then what happened was that that

Cain took Abel out for a walk in the fields towards the close of the day lifted a large rock and caved his skull and buried him in a shallow grave and that was the end of it so the anger was not only there in his heart the anger found expression and it found expression in the murder of his brother so the Lord comes along and says to Cain where is your brother and he got as you remember that classical response am I my brother's keeper you know the question that we haven't been able to face ever since in the history of the world do I really have responsibility for anybody outside of myself and so you get you get this wonderful story of anger and how it all began way back at the beginning now that my lecture notes have arrived that's what Ruth went and rescued for me

[6 : 57] I will try and deal with you in a somewhat more systematic way that is supposing I can find what it is that was bad for a walker for what?

it wasn't bad already there's a this is getting worse and worse now I guess that's I guess that's uh here we are okay I'm all set up now uh what I I want you to to have that story in mind I was going to end up with it but what what I want you to look at now is uh the the idea of three words that that appear in

I mean I just think they're they're nice suggestive words one of them is is writhe which apparently is uh related to people who suffer from that and it finds expression in this so that those three words are all related to one another so that if you are wroth you writhe with wroth that's uh that's what anger is in in the Bible now the thing that that happens which I think is uh interesting is that uh uh the Old Testament in the in the theological word book of the Bible it says the Old Testament is the story of God steady anger against sin in every form whether within Israel or outside coupled with his forbearance to execute the fierceness of his anger so that the prevailing theme through the whole of scripture of the Old Testament scriptures is the wrath of God and the restraint

God puts that wrath under so that the now remember that when we're talking about the wrath of God we are talking about a holy just righteous wrath we're not talking about bad temper we're talking about the the righteous wrath of God on sin in Israel and out of Israel through the whole of the Old Testament history and that wrath is restrained by God from annihilating the objects of his wrath now that that theme you can pick up in any book of the Bible from Genesis to Malachi there it is the justified holy righteous wrath of God and the fact that he doesn't he doesn't give expression to it well what it would normally do it would be to wipe out

Israel entirely by allowing her to pay the proper penalty for her sin that's the that's the thing that hangs over this people of God throughout the whole of the Old Testament that this this wrath of God which could fall justifiably at any moment on the people of God well then the New Testament shows everywhere the same twin attitude on on that of on the part of God an intense anger against sin and great forbearance towards the sinner and that's that's that's that's that's where the anger the anger comes from and all of this is pointing towards the day of wrath the day of of God's wrath when that when that that wrath will finally break out and annihilate and destroy and annihilate and destroy all the enemies of God all those who have aroused his indignation a just and holy and righteous God has appointed a day of wrath and on that day of wrath his wrath will be visited on the people well one other thing that the New Testament then says is that nowhere in the scriptures does it say that mercy has the last word mercy is not the final end result of this

[12 : 40] God's last word is of condemnation and destruction of sin it must be utterly and completely destroyed and stubborn sinners on the one hand and you know it's the destruction of stubborn sinners on the one hand and full pardon and restoration to the divine favor to all who truly repent and have faith in him. Now, the reason for this last statement is to show you what happens in Scripture. You know, the thing, and this again is why you will feel a great deal of sympathy for Cain when I explain this to you.

The Bible does not say at the last moment God will relent of his wrath and say, okay, you guys, you can come. It's all over now. The game's finished. No, his fixed wrath will be visited upon the stubborn sinner and only those who go through an experience of who experience full pardon and restoration to the divine favor will be spared the consequences of the day of wrath. Something has to happen in order to restrain the wrath of God being visited on everyone and everybody. And that's, you know, that's basically the problem, if you want, of the New Testament.

And so, what happens when Paul, for instance, opens his letter to the Romans? You get, in the first chapters of Romans, the, in verse 18, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men, who by their wickedness suppress the truth. And it says what the consequences of the wrath of God are to be.

And he works that out both for the Jew and for the Gentile and how inevitably they must both come under the wrath of God.

And then when you get to chapter 3, verse 21, which is the great sort of classical verse on justification by faith, it says, now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

[15 : 52] The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. There is no distinction. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are therefore subject to his wrath.

But they are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood to be received by faith.

And so, when you have this confrontation between the wrath of God and the stubbornness of man, something has to happen.

And that's what the story of the Bible is about. How can man in his self-sufficient disobedience, how can man stand up against the wrath of God?

So, what takes place then is this. And I would like just to suggest this as a kind of picture of what happens in the fulfillment of history.

[17 : 11] You see, Abel is always taken. This is Abel over here. Abel is always taken as a kind of prototype of Christ. And so, Cain has taken his brother out in the field, caved in his skull, buried him in a shallow grave, and the Lord says to Cain, your brother's blood cries from the ground for vengeance.

You know, that has to happen. Now, what I would like to suggest to you is what happens in Scripture is that Abel comes back from the dead and meets his brother Cain, and what happens?

You know, that's the central mystery of Scripture. What happens at that point? Because Abel has, at that point, every right to visit upon Cain what had been done to him.

Every reason and every concept of justice demands a life for a life. That has to happen.

And so, you get this confrontation, in a sense, in the fulfillment of Scripture, when Christ is raised from the dead. We meet him, and, at the very point at which he can say, now all the evidence is in, the reality has been revealed, the true nature of the human heart has come out into the open.

[18 : 54] Now, the wrath of God must proceed against the sinfulness and rebellion of man. And instead of that, as you know, this becomes the point at which the grace of God is revealed.

But it's revealed to those who have, who in a sense confront their younger brother. and recognize the justice of the wrath of God being visited upon them.

And then recognize the magnificent gift of the grace of God, which is there through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That God's purpose is not to visit his wrath upon us finally, but that we, through faith in Jesus Christ, might be redeemed.

He has provided that way through the sort of deadlock encounter that exists between God and man. Now, I want to quit and let you come back at me, but the thing that, that, the thing that seems to have happened, and I think, I mean, in some ways, it's the oldest problem in the world.

It's as old as Cain and Abel. But in another way, it's new, and that's this, that for a long time, the church has preached what I have preached to you this morning, that you and I are justly under the wrathful condemnation of a holy, righteous, and just God.

[20 : 42] We deserve to die because we have not loved the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, strength, and body, which we were created to do.

That's what the meaning of our life was, was to do that. But we have loved ourselves. We haven't done it. We come under the just condemnation of God.

And that, that's been the message. But now, you see, what has happened for us in our generation particularly, is that we have now a higher justice.

We now know what is good. And as we look at God, we say, God, it's you that is unjust. And we rally all the support of our contemporary society to point the finger at God and say, it's you that's being unjust.

And we have, in a sense, achieved a higher justice in our own minds whereby we can say to God, it's your fault. You are the one who needs to be condemned.

[21 : 59] The death of God is entirely appropriate. Get the concept of God out of the way. Allow man to live not according to the ancient concept of being under the wrath of God, but of having found his true fulfillment, his true maturity, in that he has put God in the dark and found him wanting and justifiably condemned him and dismissed him that he no longer is one to whom we as a society, as a people, must pay our respects.

We now have the ability to go beyond anything that we were ever taught by him. We now have a more humanitarian view of the world.

We have a view of history and the purpose of human life. we now understand what it's all about and it is expedient that God be done in.

And so our society is going about it in a deliberate and careful way. And you see, this is really what brings us, if I may say, to the heart of the whole thing where you have Jesus on the cross.

And there you see, man has said, it's you that must die. It is expedient, the high priest says, that one man should die for the nation.

[23 : 38] And so he dies on the cross. He is nailed to the cross. The cross is set up and after three hours a spear is driven into his side and there comes out water and blood indicating that he is already dead and that justice has finally been done and man is now free to do his own thing in his own way.

But then, you see, there comes along the problem that this was a just man. This was a man who was good like nobody else in all history has been good.

This was a man who knew the favor of God. This was a man who in every day of his life sought to do the will of God. This is the man who represents what all of us need to be.

and it's him we nailed to the cross. And so, the Christian gospel is to look at the person of Jesus Christ whom we have put to death and say, have we made a mistake?

you see, and it takes you right back to the primitive story from the very beginning where the basis of our acceptance with God in terms of his justifiable wrath is what we choose to offer him or what he demands.

[25 : 36] And what he demands is just and the just demands of God are met in the death of the innocent son of God on the cross.

and so, we stand before God on only one ground and that is that Christ has died for us.

He has died in our place. He has borne our sins in his body on the tree. And on that ground and on no other is there any reprieve from the day of wrath from the judgment of God, from the exercise of the judgment of God, the just wrath of God on a people of disobedient hearts.

So that's where you see the anger of God and the anger of men, the biblical concept of anger comes together and this is eloquently, I mean, I think in a very helpful and imaginative and creative way, that's what Bishop Alison Fitzsimmons, Fitzsimmons Alison deals with when he talks about the last enemy being overcome in the chapters of this book.

I'm done. I mean, I'm... So now it's your turn, but please remember to make your voice and comment when you're asking a question.

[27 : 36] I'm quite interested to hear what Howard talk about the biblical idea of anger being retribution because I would have thought it would be turn the other cheek.

You mentioned that Abel would be a just understandable thing. He would come back and do to his brother what he had done to him. to his question. Now, but just tell me, what are you asking?

Why does God advocate that we turn the other cheek and he doesn't? That's a good question. Anybody got an answer to it?

He is talking about our relationship to one another there, isn't he?

And in talking about our relationship to one another, he's I mean that I think that's where it comes from.

[28 : 57] Somebody tell me where it is in scripture, do you know? Can you give me a chapter and verse? I'm as close to you as it. Sorry?

Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's what we'd have to, that's what, that's the case we have to make.

Matthew 538, you've heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if anyone would sue you, take your coat and let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who... Well, I'm sure that one of the ways that I've always looked at this, which may or may not be helpful to you, but it's a kind of quick answer to what you're saying, is that what happens in...

is we point the gun, you see. And that's the way we establish our authority. We point the gun. And Jesus allows the gun to be pointed at him and doesn't point back with another gun.

[30 : 44] In other words, he becomes subject to the wrath of man to demonstrate the righteousness of God. And so we in...

we in turning the other cheek where it says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That's the old law. And it really was to restrain people.

When somebody comes and kills one of your children, you don't go and kill three of theirs. worse. If somebody comes and does damage to you, you don't do more damage to them in return, which is what happens way back right after the Cain and Abel story.

is that Cain and his successors develop metal tools so that they can turn into weapons and they are able to boast that somebody has killed seven and I've killed 70 in return.

And so Jesus says the law comes out one life for one life. But I tell you there's something different going on and that is that Christ becomes subject to death on the cross in order that he might demonstrate the righteousness of God.

[32 : 07] He might accomplish what couldn't be accomplished by simply a system of justice. I'm not sure how we deal with returning the other chief in terms of being done to and doing in return in a practical living sense.

I can accept that Christ didn't retaliate against the people who were attacking him. But I'm not sure where that leads me in terms of whether I play doormats as a Christian or whether a life for a life one life for one life is what should be my response.

God is that's good. Does anybody else want to ask a question around this? Because maybe we should get them all together. in a hearing. We've got to look at Romans 12 with the two ideas side by side.

That would be the most alternative. Vengeance is mine. Therefore, I'll beg. If your enemy is hungry, see him and you start to give him the drink. that Paul thinks the two are turning in the kids is related to giving up vengeance to God.

Because God can do perfect vengeance, we can. Yeah, that God ultimately will, yeah, that's good. There's a difference between being sort of being vengeful, you know, being a confident person who says to people, I want to create what you said, without showing vengeance on him, I think there's a significant concept, in my mind, in his way.

[33 : 56] Because in the Sermon on the Mount, it does go on to loving your enemies, not just your neighbor, but your enemy. I think also, we can make mistakes, we can be angry at the wrong person, we can want to punish or hurt the wrong person, because we're human, and we do make mistakes.

God's anger is perfect anger, and his understanding of what's going on is perfect. And I think that what we're trying to do is polarize, put on one pole God's wrath, and on the other pole, turning the other chief.

And I think there's a whole thing which has to do with the nature of God. Yeah, I think that's good. Yeah.

Yeah. he didn't come back and kill all of humanity for killing Jesus. He turned to the other chief. Yeah, that he reversed the...

But he didn't turn to the other chief. But he said to Pilate, you know, I mean, he didn't... He went straight to the heart of it with the Sanhedrin. Yeah. He went straight to the heart of it with Pilate.

[35 : 07] Yeah. So he didn't go down on the doormat. Yeah, and the thing that... has been greatest help to me in preparing this, actually, has been that quotation from the theological word book which says that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament teach that the wrath of God is going to be diverted.

Just, you know, God's going to say, oh, well, forget it. He doesn't say, forget it. He says, there is Jesus Christ who made, Albert Menzies, who made there by himself the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

And that Institute and in his Holy Gospel command us to continue. that that's the central reality, is that we have been forgiven through...

Yes? Isn't in that sense, isn't mercy the last word then? Earlier you said mercy is not the last word.

Well, I didn't say it, I quoted it, and I believe it. And I think that...

[36 : 44] I suppose you'd have to read the Merchant of Venice to get really through to this.

Somebody tell us the story of the Merchant of Venice in a way which illustrates perfectly the answer to this. What? Yeah, that mercy and justice are not acceptable.

That's all it means when it says the last word is not mercy. It means that justice is not going to be overlooked in the end. And that because we are under the just condemnation of God, we will suffer the just condemnation of God unless we come to terms with the fact that one has suffered that condemnation for us.

And that is Jesus Christ, unless we come to trust what he has done for us. Yeah. Are we in one thing?

I was just going to go back a little further in the passage before the eye for the eye. In our relationship with other people, whether it's quotation in here, that anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court.

[38 : 06] And in the same passage, if you come to offer an offering before the altar, and this could include our own offering, and we realize that our brother has something that we expect, you can offer in there, and go and let's compile yourself with your brother first, then come back and present your offering.

It's a question of the relationship with other people, that unless you resolve the anger between yourself and another person, it can compile.

yeah, and that's right in the Cain and Abel story, the part that I meant to get to you and didn't.

But you see, when Cain and his offering, Cain was very angry and his countenance fell, and then he went into a little counseling, and the Lord counseled him in that situation, angry with a fallen countenance, the Lord said to Cain, good counseling technique here, why are you angry?

I mean, he was writhing in wrath at this point, but the Lord said to him, why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?

[39 : 38] He said, if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door, its desire is for you, but you must master it, you know.

And the picture is that there is a wild dog outside his door, he has this anger, and he must go and face this wild dog, and either he will master it, that his anger is the wild dog, he must master it, or it will master him.

And he goes out and it masters him, and he wreaks his vengeance on his brother, which is, which is, which brings you back, in a sense, to this, to the original picture, you see, where Cain's offering was not acceptable because there was something wrong in his relationship to God and to his brother, which wasn't acknowledged.

And that's why in the Sermon on the Mount, where he says, if you have something against your brother and you're going to make your offering, make sure that relationship is straightened out first, so that it picks up that theme.

Thank you very much. I'm afraid we come to the end. Shiva, you have a comment. No. Could you write it down? Yes. There, write it down. We'll put it on the side of the next week.

[41 : 24] Help yourself to send some people. If you want to buy a book, please make out the checks to St. John's Church. And we'll see you next week. And don't, please would you power your chairs out the cuestión.

Thank you. Thank you. Thanks.