

Anger and Patience

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[0 : 00] Gracious God, as we come to your word tonight, we ask that you would challenge again a sin which we hold so deep within us.

Father, we pray that you would expose it, that we would deal with it by taking it to you for confession, and that you would help us to rise to new life, empowered by your spirit through your word, and in step with the Lord Jesus, and we ask it for your sake.

Amen. Tuesday the 15th of May, 1894, the Baltimore Orioles baseball team went to Boston to play a routine game of baseball, but it ended up being anything but routine.

In the third innings, a fierce fight broke out between Baltimore's John McGraw and Boston's third baseman Tommy Tucker. Within minutes, as you notice on most TV baseball fights, both benches were cleared as the players and the officials from both sides ended up in an all-in rumble.

The rumble then moved to the grandstands, and it spread like wildfire. Literally, it spread like wildfire because someone decided to start a fire in amongst all the mayhem.

[1 : 14] The fire destroyed the ballpark and \$70,000 worth of equipment in 1894. And then it spread from the ballpark to other Boston buildings, and by the time it was brought under control, the building had, the fire, sorry, had destroyed and severely damaged 170 buildings.

Basically, one half of Boston was wiped out. A simple altercation on third base resulted in half of Boston being wiped out.

And I say simple because when it was over, John McGraw, the guy who lost his temper in the first base, said, for the life of me, I don't know what it was about.

Proverbs 29 verse 8, mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger. God knows the destructive power of our anger, and his word warns us against it consistently.

Proverbs 29, a fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. If only John McGraw had kept his anger under control, destruction would have been prevented.

[2 : 31] If only he didn't unleash his anger. If only I didn't unleash my anger, and you unleash your anger on friends and colleagues, people you go to school with, or uni or work.

If only we could control our anger. But anger makes us feel so good, doesn't it? I mean, come on. You know, when you really get to blow that valve, don't you feel kind of moved afterwards?

It sort of gets the blood rushing. I remember one day, my younger brother was particularly being annoying, and he was trying to pick a fight with me, and I was thinking, I'm not going to retaliate.

Wise man keeps his anger under control. I drew a line in the sand in my mind. You know, I can put up with this, I can put up with this, and I decided, when he was coming back, every couple of minutes annoying me, I said, if he does it one more time, that's going to be it.

And do you know what? He didn't. And I wasn't going to let him get away with it. And so as he was walking by, and not annoying me, I decided, well, I will retaliate based on all the things you've done to me so far.

[3 : 50] And so I drew the line back one step. I grabbed him. My parents were away at this particular time, on this weekend. I grabbed him, and I went bang with his head through the plaster wall of the house.

Fortunately, in between two sort of, you know, but it just went straight through. It was quite impressive at the time. And then I had to fix the house before mum and dad got home. If only we treated seriously the command from God's word, everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. You see, our ways are not God's ways. And we need to change from being slaves to sin, to being serviced to Christ.

We need to die to anger. We need to rise to patience. Patience. And can I say that anger is everyone's issue? Because sin's everyone's issue. Anger's everyone's issue.

We all express it in different kinds of ways. There are those who blow the valve, go off their nut, and you can clearly say, oh, there's an angry person. And there are those who quietly simmer away with unresolved anger, quietly simmer away, and then maybe blow, but maybe not.

[5 : 02] There was a married couple who a friend of mine was talking about recently. They spent four months not speaking to each other. Four months of anger.

Four months of anger. So it's not just those who blow the valve and go off their nut and their face turns red. It's those who use the silent treatment, those who we draw from the relationship.

So how do we die to anger? Do we count to ten? Hold our breath? Bite our tongue? Well, that might help a little bit, but we actually need to go deeper than that.

We need to let God's word do radical surgery in our lives as we seek to live new lives with Jesus the boss. So where does it come from? We looked at last week at Genesis chapter three.

And so where does it come from? We see the birth of anger in Genesis four. So if you've got Bibles there, you need to be up. This is pretty simple. I think it's page four in your Bibles, roughly. But if it's not, you'll find it around there.

[6 : 08] Genesis chapter four. Sin is born, as we saw last week in Genesis chapter three, where Adam and Eve decide to reject God. They decide to put themselves at the center of the world. They decide to grab God's crown for themselves.

They want to become their own bosses. And now we see that anger was being born in chapter four. If pride comes before a fall, then anger is right hot on its heels. As surely as Eve gives birth to Cain, pride gives birth to anger.

But in some ways, this is kind of a surprise. Because in Genesis chapter three, it ends with the promise of a good birth. With the birth of sin came a promise of a wonderful birth.

And it's there in chapter three, verse 15, that somewhere that Eve will give birth to a son who will crush the serpent. It's a promise of reversal.

Eve's offspring will defeat Satan and put right everything that has gone wrong in this world. And so as we move into Genesis chapter four, what do you think's in the back of your mind? In the back of your mind is the question, is this son that Eve has just given birth to, is this the one?

[7 : 22] Is this the one that's going to crush the head of the serpent? Could he be the one who will defeat Satan and make it all right and reverse everything that's gone wrong? But if our hope rises with the birth of Cain, they are soon dashed.

Instead, Cain crushing the serpent, he is taken captive by sin himself. God favours Abel's offering over Cain's. We actually don't know why, but I actually think that's the point of it.

We don't need to know why. God is God. We're not. He's got all the answers. We don't. Cain's anger towards Abel stems from his defiance against God.

He wants to be at the centre. He wants things to go his way. He wants to be the one who calls the shots. He wants to be the judge. He wants to play God. And in Cain, we see the sinful, angry heart inside all of us.

Eve was visited by Satan to talk her into sin and now not even a visit from God will actually talk Cain out of sin. Have a look at verse 6.

[8 : 27] Then the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door.

It desires to have you, but you must master it. Eve actually had to be coaxed into sin, but Cain won't be turned away from it. Adam and Eve tremble with a fear after their sin, but there is no hiding in the bushes or trembling for Cain.

Confronted by God, God with his brother's blood on his hands, he literally fobs God off. He rejected God's way, he rejected God's word, and now he even rejects God's reason or God's right to even question him on it.

But the contrast between Cain and his parents goes even deeper. Adam and Eve didn't question the judgment that God handed down to them, but Cain grumbles that God's judgment is not fair.

Not only does he reject God's way, but when God calls him to account and passes judgment on him because of his sin, he sort of turns around and files for unfair dismissal. Who do you think you are, God?

[9 : 41] So self-centered, so convinced that he was right. This is the person who was a slave to sin. And friends, without Jesus, that's us.

That's us. Consumed by sinful pride, convinced that we are the center of the universe, that I am the most important person in the world, and the world revolves around me, and with me at the top of the pile, I will unleash destruction on anyone who gets in my way or challenges my right to the top of the pile.

I used to see this in goats. We used to have this on our farm, a bulldozer, and the goats have an amazing ability to climb most things.

You put a wheelbarrow in the paddock, and they'll be sitting in it for too much longer. But this bulldozer in the paddock, and we used to have goats sitting all over the tracks and on the engine bay, and the prized position was the top of the canopy, right up there, the top.

And naturally, the big guy is up on the top. And whenever a little guy wanted to try and get on the top with the big guy, because there's plenty of room up there for us all to sit and play, he would be there standing on the top, and as a little goat would jump from the engine bay to try and get up on top of the canopy, he'd be there with his big horns and go, whack!

[11 : 20] With his horns, and this thing would go, tumble, tumble, tumble, tumble, tumble. And then come back and try and do it again. It wanted to be on top of the pile. And friends, we are exactly the same.

We've got to be up there. So where is this son who will crush the serpent? Where's the offspring who will reverse evil and fix this world?

Who reverses pride? Who reverses self-righteous anger? It clearly is not Cain. And Abel's dead. So who will it be?

Well, the answer, of course, is Jesus. And the reversal is illustrated perfectly in Luke chapter 23.

This great reversal that Jesus brings, they plied him with questions.

They hammer nails into his hands. But Jesus doesn't answer. He doesn't take matters into his own hands. Even Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent.

[12 : 22] And so in Luke 23, verse 14, this is Pilate speaking. He says, You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I've examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.

Neither is Herod, for he sent him back to us. As you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and I will release him. Pilate can see that Jesus is innocent. But they hated this innocent one. And so what did the crowd cry out? Away with this man. Release to us Barabbas instead, but crucify him, crucify him.

It's the hatred and anger of Cain that leads the crowd to want to crucify Jesus. But Jesus still doesn't take matters into his own hands. You would think he had every right to be angry.

But Jesus isn't like us. Unlike us, Jesus didn't push himself to the centre of the universe, even though it was his right to be there.

[13 : 29] Instead of taking matters into his own hands, Jesus allows his hands to be nailed to planks of wood. He submits to his heavenly Father's will, even to death on the cross.

As we often sing, hands that flung stars into space to cruel nails surrendered. Not grasping, but giving. Not angry, but forgiving.

Not murdering, but murdered. Jesus is the total opposite of Cain and friends of us too. And Jesus' prayer in verse 34 of chapter 23 of Luke is the reversal in its totality.

Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing. Father, forgive them. Forgive them. Instead of anger, there is the most extraordinary patience.

Even though he has the right to be the centre, he doesn't put himself there. He turns to his Father and trusts in his Father and prays to his Father. He cops our anger towards him and he does not retaliate.

[14 : 34] And yet, he would be well within his rights too. He could have in fact demonstrated a righteous anger towards us. He could have so easily have crushed Cain and Pilate and the chief priests and the soldiers and the mockers and us.

The Son of God being nailed up by little pipsqueaks. He could so easily have crushed them and it would have been his right.

But he wasn't there to crush us. He was there to crush Satan. Jesus is the son of Eve that the world has been waiting for to defeat Satan in his work.

He came to reverse sin, the sin of Adam and Eve and Cain and our sin as well. And so he doesn't pray down the fire of God's wrath but that of his forgiveness instead.

In fact, this is the irony of your all. The fire of God's wrath gets rained down on him so that his prayer for us might be fulfilled. Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing.

[15:51] Jesus, the son of Eve who conquers sin, who masters sin when Cain couldn't do it, who at the cross paid for our sin, who at the cross was bitten by the serpent and died but who became the antidote for the serpent's bite and crushed him so that the end sin's power is no more.

Jesus is the one who doesn't take things into his own hands but puts them into God's hands. Even Jesus didn't consider himself to be at the centre but his heavenly father instead. 1 Peter chapter 2. Have a look at it. It was read out to us a moment ago. Verse 21. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled insults at him he did not retaliate. When he suffered he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

That's the example for us. To turn away from all anger and sin. But Jesus is much more than just a role model. He didn't just show us how to turn away from sin but he turned God's anger away from our sin as well.

[17:08] Verse 24. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

He bore your sin. He paid the penalty for your sin. And so yes, marvel at his example but be grateful he paid the price for your sin and for your anger.

It's important you understand what happened for you at the cross. Jesus died for you at the cross. he died for your anger. He died for the way that you have run other people down. He died for those little snappy bitey comments.

He died for the manipulation. He died for the gossip. The way that you have plotted revenge against people in your heart. For all the ways that you put yourself at the centre of the universe and played it being God Jesus died for it.

[18:12] They're the very things that murdered Jesus. They're the very things that shed innocent blood. He died for your pride, for your anger, for your lust, for your impurity, for your greed. That's what drove those nails into his hands.

But now he's fixed it all. And now that God has fixed it for us, we can fix it with each other as well. We can fix it with each other as well. We don't need to relate in pride. We don't need to fester with anger. But we love one another deeply. That's what we're to do.

Love one another deeply. Now I can say this because I'm a newcomer here. But I've actually noticed at various ports of call as I've been moving around St Paul's, it's not unsurprised, I'm not surprised by it because it happens in every church because people are here.

There's unresolved anger in this place. There's unresolved anger from things in the past. There's unresolved anger in relationships here. Simmering away, never brought to the surface.

[19:22] It's only brought to the surface when there's just little bites that happen, little snarly comments that happen between people whenever my position at the top of the pile is challenged.

God wants to deal with that. He wants to deal with it in your heart. And I want to say, friends, if there is someone here tonight that you've got anger issues with, you've got unresolved anger, unresolved tension with, then please, in the name of Christ, go and deal with it.

Deal with it. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart.

Purified hearts are loving hearts, hearts willing to forgive as they have been forgiven. Now that Jesus is your saviour, make him your character.

Make him your character. He's forgiven your sin. Now he wants to kill it. He died for your anger so that you can rise in patience. And so deal with the anger.

[20:36] Too often, we just want to be back there with Cain. When you're doing, when there's that person driving 40 kilometres an hour in the 60k zone, that's when, for me, Cain starts to whirl up within me.

Holding me up when I don't have anywhere important to go but I need to get there quickly. What's that? That's me putting myself at the centre of the universe.

Anger comes up when I put myself at the centre, when I haven't been served, when I've been gossiped about and I want justice. But if friends, if I stay at the centre, if I stay at the centre of the universe, I die with Cain.

I die with Cain and not only die with Cain, but I murder other people around me. Do you know what Jesus says? If you have anger towards your brother, you have murdered them.

You have murdered them. You've killed them. You've killed something within them. Whenever I stay at the centre of the universe, I am killing people around me all the time.

[21 : 51] I'm taking something of their life and robbing them of it. And so I need to put Jesus at the centre and I need to rise with him.

Friends, we need to die to anger and rise to patience. Anger kills relationships. It kills relationships. It kills our fellowship with each other.

So how different are we prepared to be? Amen.