

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart July 2022

This month's article has been chosen recognizing the great troubles that are likely coming upon this nation, indeed, the world. As affliction may come by attacks on our food, fuel, finances, health, freedoms, and even militarily on our native land, anger can easily rear its ugly head.

While anger may be a natural response, we, as Christians, are called to live faithful, supernatural lives. Such a life acts responsibly, preparing for trouble as we can; but it's also a life which continues to trust in God during the hard times, resting in His sovereignty and grace. We urge you to prepare spiritually through fervent prayer and increasing devotion to the God of heaven. Remember that love is the heart of the Gospel and it's the Gospel we are called to share. May Ed Welch's article be an encouragement and a help in Biblically aligning our lives during these perilous and afflicting times. All too the glory of God!

Be Angry and Do Not Sin

by Ed Welch



Ephesians 4:26–27 makes room for anger that is not sin: “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”

The problem is that we are happy to exploit what seems to be a legal loophole. Anger, in its very nature, is self-justifying. My anger is righteous; your anger is not. So if we are to find some righteous wiggle room here, we must proceed very carefully.

Let's begin with what is clear. The passage names anger as a close neighbor of the devil. At a moment's notice, anger can drift toward his murderous ways, and we can transform into something less than human. With this in mind, Paul also

writes, “Let all ... anger ... be put away from you” (v. 31, emphasis added). Our anger, therefore, puts us on high alert. Best to put ourselves in chains until it passes.

Since Paul's words in Ephesians give no specifics on anger without sin, we turn to the illustrations on which he relied. We turn first to Jesus, who, indeed, could be angry without sin. Paul, too, could be angry in his rhetoric against those who hoped to put Christians under the law of Moses (Gal. 5:12). What these and similar instances of anger have in common is that they were never in response to personal attacks but were on behalf of those who had been wronged. What did Jesus do with personal attacks? He followed the ways of the psalmists and entrusted judgment to His Father (1 Peter 2:23).

The Ephesians passage is a quote from Psalm 4:4—a reference that might give more insight. The inciting event in this psalm is not identified, but it is

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Godward.

Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord. (vv. 4-5)

probably linked to Psalm 3 and Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15-18). There, David was never angry at Absalom. When a military confrontation became inevitable, and if David's commanders happened to be victorious, David asked for one thing: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom" (18:5). Meanwhile, David was subject to Shimei's cursings (16:5-8); yet even there, David never responded in anger, choosing instead to live under what he interpreted as God's will for him (vv. 9-14).

Psalm 3 has a slightly different feel from Psalm 4. In Psalm 3, David asks that the Lord be a defensive shield of protection, yet he also recognizes that war is afoot and asks that the Lord "strike all my enemies on the cheek" (v. 7). These requests are absent in Psalm 4. Instead, the very center of the psalm is decidedly introspective and

This is the quality of righteous indignation. It is the way of wisdom and the fear of the Lord. Wise men and women know that anger is volatile and that its instincts are self-exalting. So they slow down. They count to one thousand before they react. They consider their own hearts with questions such as these: Do I live over others or under God? Do I believe that God cares and hears? Do I entrust judgment to Him, or do I prefer my own version of vigilante justice? Do I cry out to Him for help when I am agitated? Do I come to Jesus before I go to war? Do I say to Him, "I am not my own. I have been bought with a price" (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20)? Have I confessed my own sin today?

And wise people pray.

Before anger heads off into a full boil, we pray. We submit ourselves bef-

ore our Creator and Rescuer, and we pray that we would know and follow the counterintuitive ways of Jesus.

Here is a possible paraphrase of the text from Ephesians: Anger says that something is wrong, and anger may be right. So proceed with great caution. You have certainly known anger's vicious ways. You have been victimized by anger and others have been victimized. Now consider this: Is the inciting event about you or the oppression of others? When it takes up the cause of the oppressed, you are less likely to adopt anger's murderous ways. But either way, stop. Pray. Confess that you put your trust in your Father who judges justly. Slow down. Pray that the Spirit would anoint you with wisdom and grace. If you have missed this path, you have yet to find the place that Paul gives to righteous indignation.

[Taken from Tabletalk, June 2022]

"Anger is a short madness; whensoever it displaces reason, it is sinful."
~ Puritan John Trapp



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