

## The Merciful Life, Part 4 | withhold anger

## I. Sinful Anger

- **The Definition of Sinful Anger**
  - The anger which Paul is commanding us to put away from us can best be defined as a smoldering, under-the-surface thought process where we dwell on the perceived source of our anger.
  - The word is contrasted with a concept we'll discuss next time called "wrath." Wrath is an explosive, quick-flaming, often unmeditated response.
  - But anger is meditated; it's premeditated. It's described as an agitation of the soul, and it's the word from which we get our English word "ogre."
- **The Nature of Sinful Anger**
  - **Sinful anger can be camouflaged.**
    - Sinful anger isn't easily observable by our fellow disciples.
    - A comparison to the Incredible Hulk is insightful for us because when the wrathful green monster disappears, he's not replaced by the happy scientist, he's replaced by the perpetually angry scientist. That's because anger can exist internally with very little external indication.
  - **Sinful anger is the mother of clamor, slander, and malice.**
    - Every form of anger later in the Ephesians 4:31 list almost always grows from the items earlier in the list.
    - Sometimes we view seething anger as being a more grown up response because it appears to have a facade of self-control. But it's not really more mature, it's actually more toxic.
  - **Sinful anger is self-perpetuating.**
    - Matthew 5:21-22; Romans 12:19
    - If you are an angry person, you can be *sure* you're not merely reacting instinctually from an immature foundation, you're actually *justifying* your sinful, merciless responses.
    - You're actually persuading yourself to remain and continue functioning in your bitter, darkened state.
  - **Sinful anger is the result of delusion.**
    - You might think that the more you reflect on your anger, the easier it would be to realize that it's wrong, ill-founded, and sinful. But regardless of how much thought you've put into it, despite how many hours you've simmered, instead of coming to clarity about our anger, we usually dive deeper into our delusion.
    - We may be believing a lie or our logic could be very fallacious, but either way, all of our dwelling on our anger does nothing more than to perpetuate our wrong thinking.
- **The Exercise of Sinful Anger**
  - Recall a time that someone did or said something to us that we didn't like. This is the moment to be merciful, to show the love of God in Christ-honoring ways. It will involve speaking the truth in love, and there may be legitimate consequences, but our goal is to mercifully pour compassion on them as the Father does for us.
  - But instead of responding mercifully, we make a decision.
  - Are you going to give the situation over to God by trusting Him and responding as He would have you respond, or are you going to try to be god.

- If you're willing to trust God, you're going to submit yourself to His commands for how you respond to the situation. However, if you view yourself as the only person who can "make this right," then you'll either likely respond sinfully in the moment, or even if you manage to control your outward responses in the moment, you'll likely fall asleep dwelling on how unfair it is and how you'll respond the next time it happens.
- **The Cure for Sinful Anger**
  - **Our sinful anger needs to be understood.**
    - Proverbs 20:5
    - We need to be able to see what's going on for what it really is. We need to fight the delusion by really looking at what we have in our hearts.
  - **Our sinful anger needs to be compared to truth.**
    - The single best way to prevent yourself from becoming angry is to have a continual internal dialogue consumed with truth.
  - **Our sinful anger needs others to understand our sin and compare it to truth.**
    - James 5:3-20
    - Angry people need observant friends.
    - We need to purposefully invite people into our lives and give them permission to confront us with God's Word. When we do that, we set ourselves up to listen better.
  - **Our sinful anger needs to be submitted to the Bible, not pragmatism.**
    - James 1:19-21
    - Sinful anger is a filthy, bitter creature that does not produce the righteousness of God. Instead of getting angry, we must humbly submit to and accept God's inscripturated Word. That is the only thing that will help us.

## II. Sanctified Anger

- **Divine Anger is rooted in truth.**
  - This anger is going to respond obediently and consistently to God's revelation about Himself, us, and the other person.
  - Sinful anger cannot stand before the consistently applied Scriptures.
- **Divine Anger is motivated by God's glory.**
  - I Peter 3:13-17
  - Sinful anger is motivated entirely by our discomfort, our feelings, our desires. But righteous indignation is all about God.
- **Divine Anger has a time limit.** Psalm 4; Ephesians 4
  - **Our Sanctified Anger will cease when the object of our anger submits to truth.**
    - There is no reason to continue simmering when the individual has recognized their sin, confessed, and repented.
  - **Our Sanctified Anger will cease when God judges the person.**
    - God is the judge, and when the individual receives the just consequences of their choices, we have no more reason to be angry. God has gotten His divine vengeance. He is satiated, and so must we.
  - **Our Sanctified Anger will cease when we leave the person's presence.**
    - God has more important things for us to be doing than wasting emotional energy on being angry at someone who isn't even in our presence.
  - **Our Sanctified Anger will cease when the evening comes even if the person is still in our presence.**
    - It's not time to continue speaking truth in love. It's time to sleep. No kind of anger is going to help you sleep to the glory of God.