

OVERCOMING ANGER

Sylvester Onyemalechi

Many marriages failed because of the effect of anger on the marriage. Many lost their jobs because of their temper or the temper of their bosses who couldn't bear with them. Churches, ministries and organizations have been experiencing splits because of anger and the inability of brethren to control it. Many families and relationships are in shambles because the people concerned gave in to anger. Many have suffered and are still suffering from the effects of bad decisions made in times of anger. The evil or consequences of anger are too numerous to name one after the other; suffice me to say that anger is evil and deadly and everyone should learn about it and how to overcome it.

Anger is an emotional expression of an injury caused by another. Many and different things can make one angry depending on each individual. What can make one laugh can make another angry. This is because people's likes, dislikes, and temperament differs from person to person. Abusive words, insulting words, false witness and accusation, jesting, refusal to carry out superior's or elder's instruction and many more are some of the things that can cause anger.

Anger is so dangerous that it can lead to many other serious sins. Anger can lead to unforgiveness, bitterness, malice, and hatred. It can also lead to murder or suicide. Anger is so dangerous that the Bible warns about anger.

***“Know this, my beloved brethren. Let everyman be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.”
(James 1:19,20)***

The Spirit of God through James makes it clear that the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. Never will the anger of man work the righteousness of God. I remember back in 1984 when I had an encounter with my immediate younger brother who at that time just got admitted into the University. He never stopped talking about his girlfriend. One night, he so disturbed that I tried talking the girl out of his life. He started saying some insulting words, then, I got angry and started exchanging words with him in readiness to strike with my fist, and then I heard the Holy Spirit say, “The anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.” Immediately, I became weak, and I left him and asked God to forgive me and deliver my brother. It was then I knew that my anger at people when they do wrong cannot work the righteousness of God; but, the only thing that it is supposed to do is to lead me to talk to God who by His Spirit will work out righteousness in that person. The good news from that encounter with my brother was that God broke that relationship he had with the girl. Today, he is a minister of the gospel.

The Bible condemns anger so much that it advises us not to keep company with any man that is given to anger.

“Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.” (Prov. 22:24-25)

An angry man is not a man to be emulated, for God says, ***“Lest you learn his ways.”*** God does not act angrily, and does not want us to make friends with those who give in to anger, lest we start emulating them. Anger is deadly and evil.

It is natural for everyman to get angry because we must express our dissatisfaction at some word or action that is wrong or hurtful. But in doing that, it becomes necessary for us to be careful lest we fall into the category of people that are given to anger, called angry and wrathful men.

“Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” (Eph. 4:26,27)

Anger is an emotional expression of our dissatisfaction at some word or action by another against us or another. God speaking through Paul says here that we can express ourselves but we should be careful lest we give in to the anger. He says, we should be angry but do not sin. In other words we should not carry it too far by taking the law or vengeance into our own hands. We are not expected to break any law of God in the name of anger. We must not allow the sun to go down on our anger – Any and every anger must not see the next day. You must not sleep with anger till the next morning. It is okay to feel bad, but control yourself, and don't displease God. What God is expecting us to do is to practice forgiveness, as we are offended.

ANGER IS A PRODUCT OF OUR THOUGHT OR SENSE

“Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and is his glory to overlook an offense.” (Prov. 19:11)

Anger depends on the way we think and reason about what has been said or done to us. There are some people that if you insult or abuse them they will not reply you or be angry with you, because their philosophy is that what you say will not change their destiny, and moreover, any man with good sense will not say such things to them. It all depends on how you think and reason. ***“Good sense”*** the passage says, ***“makes a man slow to anger.”*** The way you look at the whole thing determines whether you will get angry or not. ***“Good sense,”*** means, when you think in line with the word of God in the face of opposition and provocation. Such a person always overlooks offences. It says, ***“It is his glory to overlook an offense.”***

Your mind has a lot to do with getting angry and dealing with anger. It is your thought that ignites it when provoked, and it's your thought that fuels it. And if not controlled will lead to unforgiveness and bitterness. And as the thoughts go on uncontrolled and now influenced by the devil, it will lead to malice, hatred and enmity.

Some will say, "It is the devil that made me angry." But, I say that, you invited the devil with your thoughts of pride and vengeance. I say pride, because, most of the time it is actually our ego that we are trying to boost or protect. Most anger out-burst takes its root from pride. And pride comes from our way of reasoning – when we think of our self more highly than we ought to.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGER

1. BE QUICK TO HEAR AND SLOW TO SPEAK.

"Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." (James 1:19)

Take your time to hear what is being said, and slow to speak or respond. It will give you enough time to understand and weigh what is being said so that you know how to answer in order to turn away wrath and anger.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Prov. 15:1)

"Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger." (Prov.29:8)

If you follow these steps, you will be slow in getting angry. Those who are quick in getting angry are not quick to hear or slow to speak.

2. BRING YOURSELF UNDER BY CONTROLLING YOUR THOUGHTS.

"Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." (Prov. 19:11)

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who RULES HIS SPIRIT than he who takes a city." (Prov. 16:32)

"Be not quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools." (Eccl. 7:9)

From the above passages it is clear that one needs to control himself in order to be slow to anger and not to sin. To rule one's spirit in the context of anger is to control ones temper. And temper has to do with our "emotional" outburst. And our emotions are influenced and controlled by our thoughts. To control therefore our temper, we have to control our thoughts. And in controlling our thoughts, we have to first change our thinking about anger, and begin to think, as God wants us to think about anger.

- a. We must see anger as God sees it. We must hate anger for God hates an angry man and does not want any of his children to keep company with a man given to anger, or a wrathful man; lest he be corrupted.
- b. We must believe that the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.

- c. We must believe that it is possible for us to overlook and forebear a hurt without nursing any grudges, against the belief that if you don't express your anger, you will be locking and piling it up inside of you till it destroys you. I am talking about forgiveness and not keeping record of wrongs.
- d. You must learn to forgive as the Lord himself has forgiven you.
- e. Whatever anybody says or does to you will not change God's plans for your life; therefore you need not bother about it.

If you are conscious of all these in your mind all the time, you will be able to rule your temper and bring yourself under control (you will be slow to anger).

3. OVERLOOK THE OFFENCE AND FORGIVE.

"Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." (Prov. 19:11)

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4:31-32)

"Forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Col. 3:13-14)

Someone will say, "I cannot forgive just like that when he has not asked for forgiveness and when he has not agreed that he is wrong." You must first understand that forgiveness helps you more than the person you are forgiving.

- a. Forgiveness helps you not to sin in your anger (dissatisfaction).
- b. It helps you not have bitterness and keep record of wrongs done to you.
- c. Forgiveness helps you to maintain your peace in the face of great provocation.
- d. Forgiveness helps you not to hate anyone or have enemies.
- e. Forgiveness helps you to be in the state of grace and fellowship with God at all times.
- f. Forgiveness keeps the devil far from you and does not give him room to torment you (Mt. 18:23-35).
- g. Unforgiveness breaks the hedge of God around the believer.

"And he that breaks the hedge, a serpent will bite him" (Eccl. 10:8)

- h. Unforgiveness makes it impossible for God to forgive you of your own sins.

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matt. 6:14-15)

You need to forgive and forget. Some will say, “I have forgiven but I can’t forget.” When I hear somebody say this, I know the person has not forgiven, for the statement reveals anger and bitterness. I also know that since we have a memory, it is not possible for us to remain without remembering the incident. To forget after forgiving the person, means, that all bitterness and anger is gone, and when we do remember the incident, we will not feel pain or anger any more. If after you have forgiven, you still feel pain and anger, know that you have not forgiven completely, you need to ask God to help you forgive and heal your heart and mind of that wound.

The process of forgiveness starts from the very point when the injury was done; that is why the Bible says we should be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. This gives room for the process of forbearance and forgiveness to begin. Do not say, “I can’t forgive immediately, I need to think about it,” or, “I need some time.” If you do that, you are going against God’s command and advice, and giving opportunity to the devil. The Bible says,

“And give no opportunity to the devil.” (Eph. 4:27)

Do not waste time in forgiving the one who offends you, forgive immediately you are offended, do not put it off to another time. Control your thoughts of anger and dissatisfaction, and think love and forgiveness in accordance with the word of God.

4. DEPEND ON THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH PRAYER.

Overcoming anger is not a thing we can do alone; we will need the help of the Holy Spirit. Within the period you are “hearing and slow to speak,” you can utter a prayer calling on the Holy Spirit to help you. Whenever it is difficult to forgive, you have to pray and ask for help. Tell yourself, “I love him”, “I forgive him”, and to the Holy Spirit, “Help me to forgive and love him for I am hurt. I am willing to forgive but it is difficult, help me, remove the pain and heal the wound.” You will see that the Holy Spirit will speedily come to your aid. If you are not able to do that on the spot, when you get home, pray about it immediately and settle the matter with God. Remember the Biblical warning; ***“do not let the sun go down on your anger, give no opportunity to the devil”***

5. GO TO THE PERSON AND SETTLE THE MATTER

The final thing to do is to confront your offender and tell the person you didn’t like what he or she said or did to you, never the less, you have forgiven him or her. Then give the person opportunity to respond. Some will acknowledge their fault and apologize, but some won’t. Whatever the response, be calm and forgiving. Gal. 6:1 says,

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”

If you happen to be the one at fault, apologize in humility make peace for there is joy in it.

In dealing with anger, you have to control your thoughts more so when personal ego and pride is involved. Think right, think godly, think love and forgiveness. Anger destroys, run from it.

WARNING

Do not act on gossip, 'hear say', or what someone told you was said or done against you by another without investigating and confronting the person with the information that has just reached you. If you always give your ears to gossips, you will find yourself getting angry and acting foolishly. Always investigate and confront before you respond emotionally.

Prov 16:28

28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

NIV

Prov 18:8

8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

NIV

Prov 20:19

19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.

NIV

Prov 26:20

20 Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

NIV

Prov 26:18-28

18 Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows 19 is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I was only joking!"

20 Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

21 As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

22 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

23 Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.

24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. 25 Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. 26 His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

27 If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.

28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

NIV

WORD OF WISDOM

- 1. Who you did not submit to, you cannot obey.**
- 2. The proof of love is obedience.**
- 3. Love without obedience is fake.**
- 4. Sincerity is a necessity in relationship.**
- 5. Pointing the accusing finger does not solve problems, but compound and defer them.**
- 6. A peaceful home is not just prayed down, but worked out.**
- 7. Conquer self and the problems will disappear.**
- 8. If you really love your spouse, do what will please him at all times.**
- 9. Who to marry is not the first question to be asked and answered by a single, but am I prepared for marriage?**
- 10. If you will channel your energy and effort at building and perfecting yourself, you will attract a quality partner.**