

Conquering Anger

Anger is an emotion that most of us experience frequently. It seems that everyone has a breaking point. Some have a “long fuse;” others have a “short fuse.” Sometimes, anger is justified and sometimes it is not. In Genesis 30:1-2, Rachel’s sister, Leah, has already had four sons while Rachel has had none. She feels stressed and nearly demands Jacob to give her children. Jacob gets angry, asking if he is God, to give children on demand. Their exchange is all too familiar.

If we want to control our anger, it begins with making the decision to control our anger. No one will control it for us. We must realize that controlling expressions of anger is the mature response. “Flying off the handle” is the immature response. Paul writes in Colossians 3:8, “But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.”

Telling us that we need to put these behaviors aside, Paul teaches us that we can control them. We have the ability to stop words from flying and fists from flying.

So, what do we need to do; what can we do to conquer and control our anger, our expressions of wrath? One thing we can do is pay attention to our bodies, our physical responses. Can you feel your heart beat pounding? Your pulse racing? You know your feelings are hurt. You’re starting to raise your voice (that’s a clear sign you are feeling angry!) Maybe you go to the other extreme - you clam up or withdraw. But ask yourself, “Why am I getting angry?”

It seems, more frequently than not, the most frequent reason we get angry is due to pride. Our own pride is hurt. Someone has not met our expectations. Things have not gone the way we wanted. Someone has let us down. We get angry when the world does not do what we want it to do.

Anger in and of itself is not sinful. God gets angry; for example, He got angry at Moses for his excuses not to go into Egypt (Exo. 4:11-17). Jesus got angry; He was angry at the Pharisees for their hardness of heart (Mark 3:1-6). But if we would “be angry and yet do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26), we must be careful that we get angry only at sin. Has someone sinned? That justifies some righteous anger. If their behavior is not sinful? Maybe we should calm down, cool off, and give them a break.

Your fellow-servant in Christ,
Paul
Veritas non verba magistri