

## **Anger, The Devil's Playground!**

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We live in an angry world! Far too many people spend their time being angry and irritated about things over which they often have no control. Although being angry is not a sin (in fact Paul reminded, "Be ye angry, and sin not..." Ephesians 4:26a KJV), anger is a dangerous playground of the devil, especially for those seeking to follow Christ. Anger that spirals outside of its healthy limits can destroy and hurt the child of God. There are essentially three serious dangers regarding uncontrolled anger with which each Christian must be familiar and work diligently to avoid and overcome.

The first dangerous level of uncontrolled anger is bitterness. Every human being has had situations in his or her life, which if left unchecked, can result in bitterness. Often, anger causes us to play the "victim" of our circumstances and our pasts, which becomes a breeding ground for bitterness. Bitterness usually stems from things that happened to us which are unfair. A very difficult lesson to learn is that life is filled with unfair situations! For example, it is not fair for a parent to have to bury his child. It is not fair for a person to be diagnosed with cancer, especially a young person. It is not fair for a little baby to be abandoned and abused. However, even when unfair circumstances come our way, it behooves us to deal with them properly in order to not allow anger to take root and permit bitterness to grow. We have a choice; we can use that unfair situation to become better or bitter! Paul reminded, "Let all bitterness...be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31). No doubt, Paul's past could have caused him to become bitter, but rather he chose to forget "those things which are behind..." (Philippians 3:13b). Examine yourself; has uncontrolled anger caused you to become bitter?

The second danger of uncontrolled anger is boiling. Boiling is an intensified reaction of anger. This reaction usually manifests itself in an individual wanting justice and possibly even revenge. This phase of anger is especially dangerous because most of these plans and feelings are on the inside! An injustice has been done to us, and now we are going to settle the score. This is often the stage where the planning of very serious things occurs (Matthew 15:19). Have you ever been so angry inside that you wished another dead? Have you ever cheered from the inside at the misfortune of another who has wronged you or a loved one? This is surely the stage of anger that Jesus referenced in Matthew 5:21. John wrote of it as well, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer..." (1 John 3:15a). The devil's favorite playground is surely the mind of the Christian who allows anger to boil and stew within his or her heart.

The third danger of uncontrolled anger is blasting. This usually results in our hearts beating faster, our minds thinking more slowly and our mouths moving at speeds that challenge many jet engines! This is the stage where we "lose control" and say and do things that we will surely regret later. However, at the time, these words and actions seem justified and right. When we allow our anger to get to this stage, we become fools! "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back" (Proverbs 29:11 ESV). Controlling one's anger often takes years of mistakes in order to perfect. However, God desires for His people to have self-control! "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Anger is a real emotion that Christians must face regularly. How we deal with this emotion determines our relationships here on earth and in eternity. When anger creeps upon us, the following three questions can help us to deal with it properly. Reason: "Why am I angry?"

Taking time to evaluate your anger can be a great help! Resolution: “Is there anything I can do to change this situation that angers me?” Sometimes, there is little we can do to change the situation. We cannot control other people, and so we must work at controlling ourselves. Reaction: “What will I do about this?” No matter what situation comes our way, we always have the power to choose how we will react! No one chooses this for us. Our reaction as God’s people should be to “return good for evil” (Genesis 50:21; Romans 12:21). Although certainly not an easy thing to accomplish, we can gain victory over sinful anger. The next time anger knocks at your door, remember anger is the devil’s playground, and he loves it when you agree to play!



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