

Anger (#2)

Joe Slater

Anger isn't necessarily sinful. Jesus Himself became angry, but always with legitimate reason. For example, the hard hearts of His critics drew his anger in Mark 3:5. Asking, "Why am I angry?" helps me to determine whether my anger is righteous or sinful

Another question to ask is: "What fruit comes from my anger?" When Cain became angry (Genesis 4:1-8), he ended up murdering his brother! In Ephesus, the Diana-worshippers were "full of wrath" because Paul taught against idolatry (Acts 19:23-34). They rioted two solid hours!

Jonah the prophet became angry when the Lord didn't destroy Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. He became even angrier when the plant that had been shading him withered. So he sat outside the city and pouted like a child! (See Jonah 4:1-8.)

In Jesus' parable of the lost son, the older brother became angry when the father celebrated the lost son's return. He complained bitterly and refused to join in the festivities! (See Luke 15:28-30.)

By contrast, Jesus' anger produced good fruit. On both occasions when He cleansed the temple and drove out the money-changers and merchants, who can deny His anger? But He vindicated the holiness of the temple. Likewise when He denounced the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23), He was doing exactly what was needed! They deserved the scolding, and those who witnessed it learned about righteous indignation.

Christians, above all others, ought to be outraged at ungodly behavior (abortion, racism, pornography, and others). That involves not only feelings, but appropriate actions to effect positive changes.

Jesus My All

I read the other day, "Even when you have it all, you don't really have it all!" This statement says it all because Jesus is our all.

We may seek more, and greater possessions such as the rich fool of which Jesus spoke. "*And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods'"* (Luke 12:18), but as Jesus goes on to teach, these things are not what the true Christian should be seeking. These things are not lasting even as we are not lasting, "*But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be'"* (Luke 12:20).

Jesus warns, "*Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions"* (Luke 12:21). Why this warning? Because those who seek possessions often neglect the more important thing, our spiritual wellbeing. Such things do not make up the life that God desires for us. "*So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God"* (Luke 12:21).

The preacher, (Solomon, Eccl. 1:1), a man of both wealth and wisdom, sums up his life with these words, "*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccl. 12:13). These are words of good advice from one who had experienced an abundance of things during his lifetime. But his experience taught him what Jesus has told us, that life does not consist of our possessions. We must have more than possessions. We must have Jesus.

May I suggest that having possessions is not wrong, in and of itself. But it is wrong if we strive for more and more earthly possessions, and yet neglect having Jesus in our lives.

Speaking on a personal basis, I can attest that I have had many earthly possessions during my lifetime. But having reached the silver (gray), years of my life, I can

honestly say that my possessions were not gained while neglecting Christ. I can also say that my possessions have come to mean less as having Christ, my all in all, has come to mean more. The good life, the abundant life, is in Christ, my all. Only in Christ do we ever have it all

"Pleasures of earth, so seemingly sweet,
Fail at the last my longings to meet;
Only in Thee my bliss is complete,
Only, dear Lord, in Thee!"

--Roy Allen Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)

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Godly Giving

1. *First give yourself to God (2 Corinthians 8:5).*
2. *The giver's attitude is more important than the gift (2 Corinthians 9:7).*
3. *You reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7).*
4. *Commitment time is now (2 Corinthians 8:5).*
5. *"Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).*
6. *Give God the firstfruits (Proverbs 3:9-10).*
7. *"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).*

--Mark Posey (via Pulpit Preview)