

The Anger Of Man

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

As I have said to you on other occasions, I very intentionally try not to view the daily national news reports. I don't subscribe to the television channels that provide the news and I don't take a newspaper.

Why do I do that? It's because most all of my life I have been an emotional person, prone to anger. And most all the news reports seem to lead me in that direction, to cause me to be upset, and to be angry.

And knowing that I can do little or nothing about the many troubles and problems that are being reported on the news, I have chosen to simply avoid viewing any of it.

However, with that being said, I do, unfortunately allow myself one avenue of knowing about the things that are taking place in our world. I occasionally, throughout my day, turn to a selected news webpage on my computer. I say, unfortunately, because I still do get upset and angry. My computer is no "safe haven" for news, no matter how selective I am with my choices.

And recently, with all that has been taking place in our nation, I must confess to you that I fight within my own soul to not be "angry", "really angry", about all of it, about the people who are rioting, about the decisions of our government leaders and, especially about our very biased media.

And "anger", "excessive anger" clearly is the controlling emotion within all those people and the events that are taking place. Anger is written on every face and in every voice of the people who are rioting, and in our government leaders and, especially within our media, which feeds upon and leads anyone and everyone who will listen, on to even more "anger", excessive and violent "anger"!

. . . May I pause for a moment and remind us of the scripture text we are studying here today. Listen!

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

Verse 20 is so evident in every venue of the current events of our world. Pure, unbridled “anger” is taking place and none of it, absolutely none of it will “produce the righteousness of God”.

And I know that to be especially so within the recesses of my own mind and soul. Folks, I do not have the strength of character to withstand the flow of the demonic wave of anger that is covering our nation’s events today.

For me personally, and I will ask that you examine and evaluate your own soul’s response, but again, for me personally, one of the problems with my receiving information into my mind is that my personality requires my mind to deal with the information I receive.

And unfortunately, I prove to myself daily that by using only the faculties and strength of my human mind and character, I am completely unable to deal with all the distressing information that I am exposing myself to, especially in a manner that God will approve of.

Again, let me read the scripture text we are studying here today.

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

These words in verses 21 “filthiness and rampant wickedness” are such a perfect description for all that is taking place in our nation today. But not only that, as I view that “filthiness and rampant wickedness”, I recognize that my own soul is being corrupted by it, yes in opposition to most of it, but all the same corrupted by it.

And because I can do nothing about the “filthiness and rampant wickedness”, to stop it, to change it or to improve it. I can only watch and become more and more angry, permitting sinful thoughts and sinful frustrations to be stirred up within my soul. And I have great difficulty dealing with it all.

I’m reminded to the quandary that the Apostle Paul suffered in Romans chapter 7. There, Paul spoke about how, as he was presented with some of the usual circumstances of his daily life, he would respond in ways that he did not want to respond.

Paul knew exactly what God wanted of him. And his spirit was truly strong, but unfortunately, as with my flesh, Paul’s flesh was weak. Listen to how Paul described his struggle!

¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (Romans 7:15-20)

Folks, this response seems to take place within my soul almost daily. And may I suggest that this same response is also probably taking place within your soul as you view the circumstances of these days.

And I truly despise the weak and wicked response of my flesh. But yet, I continue to open up my news webpage and catch sight of the pictures and the words about all the wretched “filthiness and rampant wickedness” that’s taking place. And I keep getting angry all over again.

And I can hear the gentle voice of the Lord Jesus, whispering in my ear, saying, “why do you keep kicking against the goad my child”, “give it up”! “You are no longer a part of this world!” “I have purchased you out of it”. “So, come out and be separate from it!” “You are Mine! My blood was shed for you! Come on out and be separate from this world, and let Me be the One to take care of all that rampant wickedness that is making you so angry”.

And folks, I really want to do that, to obey His voice. But as yet, I don’t seem to quite know how to do it!

May I ask you? Do you find yourself being angry about all these things that are taking place in our nation today, about what God describes here in our text as being “filthiness and rampant wickedness”?

If you are angry, how does your anger manifest itself? I ask that question because we each have our own way of being angry. In my younger years, my anger was often explosive. In only a moment, my emotions could go from a relative calm to fiery and then to fierce. And depending on who I was angry at, I would give that measure of “vent” with my words.

And thinking back, it’s a curious thing, but I could somehow control my “venting” if the object of my anger was my boss or someone else that I viewed as important. But unfortunately, with the lesser important people, like my beloved family members, the ones who should have been most important of all, I would “vent” an “vent” “angrily”.

But then as I grew older, my explosive anger began to tone down, and it reduced to a “seething” form of anger, the kind of anger that is held inside and only vented through the adrenalin that flowed through my neck muscles, giving me tension headaches.

May I say, the quiet seething form of anger is only better for the people who would have otherwise endured my explosions. For myself, the seething form of anger was just as sinful.

Our scripture text again . . .

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

So then, may I ask again? Are you angry, especially when you turn on your news programs and watch all the “filthiness and rampant wickedness” taking place within our nation today, within its leadership, and within our media people, and especially within the riots on our city streets?

I confess to you that it has been ever so difficult to prepare these words for you and not let at least some element of anger seep through in this message. I have repented over and over again, and I am still repenting even now.

And I confess also that I regularly experience the struggle that the Apostle Paul endured and spoke about there in Romans chapter 7. I do not do the things I want to do, but I instead do the things I hate.

May I also inject a caution into this message that is sometimes confusing to many very solid and earnestly committed Christians. Over in Ephesians 4, we read the words

26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

It seems that many well-meaning Christians will debate as to whether or not their anger in a circumstance is a “righteous anger”. May I say, for myself, that I can never remember an incident in which I could claim that my anger was completely “righteous”. My anger may have begun that way, but it seemed invariably to change and then to become sinful.

And surely that is one of the reasons God gave us this clear warning in verse 20 of our text,

20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:20)

So then, may I ask again of you personally, “Is anger a problem within your soul”? “Is anger even perhaps a regular part of your nature?”

Unfortunately, as we consider matters such as this, there is a defensive mechanism within most all of us that reaches to answer that question in the kindest way possible, protecting ourselves from the “real truth”. But God needs for us to be honest with ourselves.

And if we are truly honest, we will probably agree that there is at least some level of anger present within our soul, perhaps packaged and expressed differently, depending upon our individual personality, but there all the same.

How can I know this to be true for you, that each of you are to some degree struggling with this matter of anger? I can know simply because God has seen fit to address the matter here within these words of our text. And none of us are exempt from struggling with this manner of sin.

And in addition of these words, you might recall the scriptures we shared in a recent message from Romans chapter 3. There God told us emphatically that “there is none righteous, no not one”.

Folks, sin and sinful responses are a part of our old sinful nature. And yes, we are saved, but our flesh will not let us rest. Our old flesh will, as the Apostle Paul reminded us in Romans 7, rise up and seek to take possession of our responses. And too often, we will give in to our flesh. And the question for you and me today is, “what are we to do with these responses of our flesh?”

May I share some more of what the Apostle Paul revealed about his struggles with his flesh? Listen as he meanders through his consideration! Paul tells us,

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
(Romans 7:21-25)

Did you hear Paul's answer to his dilemma there in verse 25? He said, "Thanks be to God, it is through Jesus Christ our Lord".

And also, in the very next verses, over in Romans 8, we are given God's blessed assurance, in essence saying to us that while yes, often we may be taken captive for a season to various sinful behaviors, such as the anger that is spoken about in our text for today,

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)

Yes, you and I, though we are completely and eternally saved, we really will, often do dumb and sinful things, like my turning on that news program and then getting angry about all that I see . . . though I do that, I do not lose my salvation over it. I am still saved in spite of my foolishness. Because

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)

Another question that some might ask is, "is this all that I must do, simply lean back and enjoy the forgiveness of Christ for my many sins?" The answer is "Yes", that really is all that we must do! However, . . . however, in gratitude to Christ for His loving forgiveness, we really should also do the thing that we should have done in the beginning of our struggles.

We should do as any loving "bride" would do with her "Beloved Bridegroom". We should "draw near" to Him. And the scriptures assure us that when we do that, when we draw near to Christ, He will draw near to us.

And folks, when He does that, when he draws near to us, His blessed Holy Spirit will begin to replace our sinful responses with the presence of His precious "Spiritual Fruits", "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control".

And oh, what a joy-filled experience begins to take place when He does that. As the old hymn tells us,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

So then, if you struggle with sins such as this one that we've been talking about today, that of "anger" in all its many forms, may I remind you and me, that our sinful anger and frustration can do absolutely nothing to stop, or to change or to improve the "filthiness and rampant wickedness" that is taking place in our nation today.

And rather than allowing ourselves to watch and to become all the more angry, with sinful thoughts and frustrations, may I instead invite you and me to "stop", "simply stop" and to "turn our eyes upon Jesus". And to ask His Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and minds with His fruits of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control".

And I promise you, on the authority of these blessed scriptures, that you and I will immediately begin to have a much "better day". Listen as we close . . .

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

Let's pray!