

# Anger

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 30 March 2014

Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] Anger. Anger can take us by surprise, can't it? Your own anger. You can be capable of flaring! Even when you didn't see it coming, can't you? And while someone else's anger over an issue which you didn't think twice about, but it clearly means the world to them and it's left you speechless as you watch how angry this person has become. And I think we've become used to, haven't we, thinking that anger is a bad thing. It's been really good. We had a good household Bible study in Ephesians 4, 5, not 5, which was good, I can't remember where it was. And we looked at that on anger. And you see that anger is not necessarily a bad thing. But in our culture, we did anger management classes. Go to YouTube and type in anger fails. I spent a good 10 minutes doing research on that this week. People do incredibly stupid things because they get angry. And most people's general conception of anger is that it is a very bad thing. It's a bad emotion. But Proverbs has a different slant for us.

Rather than a simplistic presentation, these wise things show you that anger is a very complex emotion. Is it bad to be angry? Do we need anger in our world? Am I more angry than I realise? What is the cause of my disproportionate anger? And what does that say about me? And can I be like God when I am angry? Proverbs actually takes a very complex subject and charts a simple course for us through this complex emotion. So I've just got three simple points tonight that I want to lead you through. Number one, some of our anger is right.

Some of our anger is right. Somebody has said that the closer we get to Christ, the angrier we will get at real evil. We have a saviour who knocked over tables. And Proverbs opens just a little window for us on the kind of anger that is right and fitting and proper in God's world. And the way Proverbs does it is by inviting us to look at a king and his king.

Not all kings get it right. Not all kings get it right but this king does. And Proverbs says, here is what it should like when God's kind of king is on the throne. So look at chapter 16 in verse 10. An oracle is on the lips of a king. His mouth does not sin in judgment. And that verse goes hand in hand with the next three. And do you see there in those verses the issue of truth and righteousness and justice. That is what a king is there for. A king has got such authority and power. And he is meant to be like a moral barometer. That's what our rulers are meant to be like. They are meant to be a plumb line for their kingdom. And here are the standards of my rule. He says, here are the economic ground rules. Verse 11, no sleight of hand with your weights and your measurements and your scales. Adjust balance and scales are the Lord's. All the weights in the bag are his work. No double dealing in your business practices.

[ 3 : 40 ] No double standards in your speech. No. Kings value a man who speaks the truth. And that is why we then get in verses 14 and 15 this. A king's wrath is a messenger of death and a wise man will appease it. Do not cross a king like this. Do not mess about with a king who loves the truth. For truth will out and he has the power to deal with it. Verse 14 is not saying that the king's wrath being a messenger of death is a bad thing, is it? It's an excellent thing actually. For it means that all will be right and all will be well in his kingdom.

There is a sense of it back in chapter 14 and verse 35. A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully. You have a choice of what you want from the king's hand. His favor which is like cool refreshment of life. Life giving water. Or his wrath which is like the grim reaper standing at your door. Look at chapter 19 and verse 12. The king's wrath is like the growling of a lion. Lion in the Bible. Lions in the Bible are often used as pictures of real strength just like they are in our culture. Real strength and power and might and dignity. And the lion roars and he shows that he will protect and fight for what needs to be protected. Do you see the point of these images? The point of these images of the king and his kingdom is that some fire Andrew is right. And because there's a king on view here there's a very very important underlying principle

which helps you and I get a definition of anger. And so we're trying to take this on board as we move through the rest of the sermon. Anger is an emotional response or an emotional force. A force of resistance or attack which wells up within us when something blocks our way to something good. Let me say that again. Anger is an emotional force of resistance or attack which wells up within us when something blocks our way to something good. So there's something good. And something is blocking the path to that which is good. And so anger is a right emotional force.

A force of resistance or attack against that which blocks the way to something good. The king wants justice and righteousness in his kingdom. And when something blocks that good goal the king emotionally resists that obstacle with anger. He wants it removed. When he sees the servant acting shamefully his good desire to have a wise servant is blocked and so anger is the emotion which drives him to seek the situation to be rectified. Now that's a very helpful way of thinking about anger. Anger is a powerful negative emotion to an experience we see as unjust. Anger is a very powerful negative emotion to an experience we see as unjust. And the emotion can be an ally in the need to do something about the wrong we perceive. And so anger can push you to do the right thing.

And so with that picture of anger. A good king ruling his kingdom. And that definition of anger. An emotional response to a perceived wrong. Here's the principle underlying both of these. Anger is right anger. When people in power act in the right on behalf of others.

When they act wrongly towards others. When people in power act wrongly towards others it is right to be angry. That's what the king shows us. He is the person who has the power. He has the ability. He has the authority to protect the people in his care. To protect his kingdom. And so when a line is crossed he is moved to defend.

[ 8 : 04 ] What needs to be defended. And so some of our anger is right. When we use the power we have to protect others. Anger is a holy emotion. When it has justice as its goal. And love as its motivation.

I read something this week that described a mother as a tigress for her children. We know that don't we? Don't come between a mother and her child. Don't harm the child.

The fiercer the love and the greater the good at stake. The more intense will be the anger. Great love is the root of great anger. You must never think that the opposite of anger is love.

Or that love is an alternative to anger. That isn't the case. No, the opposite to love is what? It's apathy. That is the tepid alternative to anger as well.

Some of our anger is right. But secondly, a lot of our anger is wrong. A lot of our anger is wrong. Let me remind you of the definition that I gave.

[ 9 : 20 ] For it's when we see what anger is meant to be. That we can begin to take the layers off so much of our anger. And just see why so often it's just very obnoxious.

So in some ways in which we express anger wrongly. And how it rears its ugly head in our hearts. And if not always in our actions. So the good emotion of anger can become one of the seven deadly sins, can't it? Anger can become a vice. And not a virtue by having the wrong target.

When we aim our anger at the wrong place. Or the wrong person. You see, good anger fights for a good cause. And yet so often with our anger.

That we decide what the good cause is. And don't we often have to admit. That often we feel that good cause is us. Isn't it? Me.

[ 10 : 19 ] And my rights. And my entitlements. And what I'm doing. And what I'm owed. So instead of fighting for justice. Like a good king in a just kingdom. Who is able to use his power from righteous ends.

We allow our anger to fuel the fight for the me. First agenda. And so the claims of others fall by the wayside.

And anger's fighting power. Its energy goes off. Goes instead. To protecting me and my interests. Listen to the American Psychological Association.

This is it. The underlying message. Of highly angry people. Is that things ought to go my way. Angry people tend to feel that any blocking.

Or changing of their plans. Is an unbearable indignity. And that they should not have to suffer in this way. Maybe other people do. But not them.

[ 11 : 19 ] So let's stop for a moment. And let's think about the last time. You got angry. Just think about that for a moment. When it was. You don't have to tell anyone.

You don't have to put up your hand. In fact please don't put up your hand. When was the last time you got angry? Maybe it was just irritation. I don't know. Maybe you can recall a time. When you just completely lost it. Or at least inside yourself. You wanted to lose it. And when you stand back.

And you look at it. And you think about that situation. What you will find. Is that somewhere in the situation. A goal you had was blocked. Someone or something.

Presented you with an obstacle. And your emotional reaction was anger. Now look at it a little bit more deeply. That thing that made you angry.

[12:13] Was your emotional resistance to the blockade legitimate? Was it? Perhaps it was. Or was it perhaps because you were doing your rights.

And your interests. As more important than others. Here's a way to unpack it. A little bit for yourself. Do you typically get as angry.

About an injustice done to others. As you do about a cutting personal remark. Made to yourselves. Oh well you might say.

You might think. Well I'm good at it. Depends on a rightful sense. Of whether it's. Whether.

Whether. It depends on a rightful sense. Of what is due either to ourselves. Or to others.

And a sense of what justice requires. But I want to say to you. That's exactly the problem. Because we want. Each one of us. To decide. For ourselves. What is rightfully due to us. Isn't it true.

[13:14] That we often hit. The wrong targets. With our anger. I was at a minister's conference. The other day. And somebody was speaking of anger. And the minister said.

Because most of us are too weak. To stand up. To the people. That causes trouble at church. We become bullies at home. It's very very interesting.

And so. And we will not stand up. To the person in church. Who is out of order. And who kind of speaks to us. But we'll go home. And we'll lose it with our wives. And over a very little thing.

And you can see. Some very very ashamed ministers. We look to run the room. Or one another. It's true. Is that we often hit the wrong targets. With our anger. Our anger is exposing something about us.

And about something of our highly inflated view of ourselves. Or our elevated sense of our own importance. And yet. Even as we ourselves should be looking in the mirror. We lash out.

[14:15] At others around us. Often missing victims. Paulus gives a very clear example of this. In chapter 19 verse 3. When a man's fallen brings his way to ruin.

He lashes out. His heart rages against the Lord. It is possible to ruin myself. And to blame someone else.

That I've done so. And when we hit the wrong target. With our anger. We lay the blame in all the wrong places. And we don't take responsibility. For our actions. Look what you made me do.

The angry parent says to the child. As they make a mistake. And lash out. Because the child has been pushing them. And pushing them. And pushing them. Anger is right.

Only when it writes a wrong. And when it expresses love. Towards another. But when it simply expresses. The fact that you've disturbed.

[15:15] My view of myself. And the universe. And not seen me. For the important person. I think I am. Then that anger expressed. Hits the mistaken target. And so often.

We express that anger. Wrongly. Did you notice. So many of the ways. As described in these proverbs. A quick tempered man. Chapter 14.

And verse 17. Acts foolishly. He does foolish things. Anger. Quickly expressed. Is rarely right.

The text. That you immediately sent. Didn't have the effect. That you hoped it would. The email. That you immediately responded to.

Instead of waiting a day. To respond to. Cause great hands. To comment on the blog. Three times. We've got the words. Hot tempered.

[16:11] Again. The ESV. Doesn't help us very much here. So look at chapter 15. In verse 18. A hot tempered man. Stays up strife. It's the same word. It's the same word in 19. Verse 19. A man of great wrath.

Will pay the penalty. That's a hot tempered man. In chapter 29. In verse 22. On the other side. A hot tempered man. Stays up strife. And that proverb.

29. Verse 11. A fool. Gives. Full vent. To his spirit. To his anger. Is so important.

As just being myself. A fool. Gives vent. To that. We know that.

Don't we? You don't need me to tell you that. In fact. You don't need me to be a Christian. To tell you that. So we've got phrases. Don't we? I was just letting off steam. Or blowing a gasket.  
[17:11] Or having a short fuse. Letting off steam. Blowing a gasket. Having a short fuse. They're all images. Aren't they? Tightly connected. With explosions. And when somebody.

Let's off steam. In my experience. When somebody. Blows a gasket. When somebody. Has a short fuse. The devastation. Is immense. And probably.

This is so helpful. Anger has an effect. On our bodies. But you know that. Do you? You see it. Don't you? On the school run. Occasionally. When the child.

The toddler normally. And the mum just. Or the dad. Loses it. Red faces. Surging adrenaline. Blood pressure. Babies popping out. But more than that.

Some psychiatrists. Refer to depression. As the frozen rage. Repressing. And keeping inside. The intensity. Of what we feel.

[18:12] So that eventually. It harms us. From the inside out. I think we're seeing that. More and more. And that's what. 14. Verse 30. Points to. A tranquil heart.

Gives life to the flesh. But envy. Makes the bones. Rot. This goes with the proverb. Just before it. In verse 29. Whoever is slow to anger.

Has great understanding. But here. As a hasty. The temple. Exalts folly. And the word. Envy there. In verse 30. Means hot passion.

It means. Intense heat. Intense heat. On the inside. Is capable of rotting. Well.

The components of your body. The body. In other words. What's the writer of Proverbs saying? He's saying it's crippling. So anger. Is wrongly expressed. When it is. When it is.

[19:11] Vented in a rage. And it can be wrongly expressed. When it's kept inside. And here as well. Sometimes our anger. Is wrong. Because we've got the wrong fears.

What I mean is. Is that so often. Our anger expresses the fact. That we fear. Not being in control. And that fear. Comes out in the form of anger. The absence of anger.

Is nearly. Always linked. To the right kind of control. Properly controlling myself. And my emotions. And bringing them into line. With God. And his will. And the presence of anger.

Is often likened. To the wrong kind of control. Isn't it? Wanting to control others. To control my world. To control my environment. To control how you respond to me.

And what I want you to do for me. And I get angry. When you do not do what I want. Anger is deeply connected.

[20:11] To our love of ourselves. And especially our fear of exposure. And our need for security. That when we're insulted. Or threatened. Anger takes it personally.

And that anger is usually an attempt. To take control of the situation around us. We fight with anger. To control the outside world around us.

And Prometh says to us. That that isn't actually the real battle. The real battle is to fight inside. With ourselves. Me. Here.

Inside. Because that is what I need to control. Not you. And your behaviour to me. And it took me a while.

To work that out as a minister. That I can't control you. And your behaviour to me. I can't say that. Neither can you. I have no say over that. But I do have a say.

[21:10] The Bible says about how I respond. Two prophets show us that. Look at chapter 16 in verse 32. Whoever is slow to anger.

Is better than the mighty. And he who rules his spirit. Than he who takes a city. Those military heroes.

We all love the heroes. Of special forces. Who save the day. In a dramatic fashion. Five Live. Radio Five Live. Is 20 years old.

And they are going through. The kind of great moments. And they. There's a great clip. Of when. Obama announced. That they captured. Osama Bin Laden.

And. But then they had. The interview. With the Navy SEAL. Who said. It wasn't quite as heroic. As we might have expected. But for some of us. What could be more dramatic.

[22:07] Than that. What could be more dramatic. More manly. Than being a Navy SEAL. Look at what that verse says. Chapter 16. And verse 32. Whoever is slow.

To anger. Is better than the mighty. And he who rules his spirit. Than he who takes a city. Better a patient man.

Than a man like Jack Bauer. From 24. A man who controls his temper. Is better than one. Who saves a whole city. From a nuclear terrorist threat.

Do you see what it says. It's very interesting. Is that conquering a city. Is child's play. Compared to conquering. The turbulent. Demanding.

Upset. Upset world. Inside of my heart. To be a city. Is a battle for one day. Isn't it. But here is a battle for life. Every day of your life. And when somebody. Is able to control themselves.

[ 23 : 04 ] And control their temper. Well look what 1911 says. Good sense. Makes one slow. To anger. And it is his glory.

To overlook an offence. I've heard of love. The contrasts in Proverbs. The contrasts. All the way through. Between the patient man. And the quick tempered man.

14. 29. We have slow to anger. It's great understanding. But he was a hasty temper. Exalts folly. 15. 18. A hot tempered man. Stirs up strife.

But he was slow to anger. Quietens contention. The word for patient. Is literally. Long of face. Versus. Now. There is not.

There is probably. Peter's thesis written on it. But what it really means. Is this. It is supposed to be. Who has got a relaxed face. A face.

[ 24 : 00 ] Which isn't constantly changing. According to their situation. And the word for quick tempered. Is literally short of spirit. Long of face.

Versus. Short of spirit. And the long faced man. Or woman. Well. They learn to let things slide. The patient man or woman.

The long faced man or woman. When they learn to let things go. That is their glory. It's actually the same word. That's used elsewhere. In the bible. For beauty.

A beautiful city. Beautiful clothes. Beautiful jewellery. Or even for the beauty of God himself. When you are long faced. When you are patient enough. To let something go. And forgive.

You become beautiful. It's a way of saying. You see. That there is a way of being in the world. Which says. I will get angry. When I see someone oppressed.

[ 24 : 59 ] Someone else. And when I see them take from others. What. What those people are too weak. Or powerless. Powerless. To prevent from. That. Prevent being taken from them.

That when I see the weak oppressed. That will arouse my anger. When it comes to others. I will get angry. But when it comes to me.

Personally. Me and my small private kingdom. Of my ego. My desires. And my wants. Well do you know what? The boundaries are very very large. And there are no landmines around me.

And you can walk around me. With freedom. Because if you step on my toes. I'll let it go. I will choose the beauty of forgiveness.

Rather than the ugliness of anger. And upsetting me. And the only way to do this. Is to move from the wrong kind of fear. Fear of others.

[ 26 : 01 ] Fear of not being in control. Fear of being exposed. And wrong. Wronged. And Proverbs is helpful on that. Because it says.

Replace that kind of fear. With the right kind of fear. Which Proverbs has been teaching us about. All along. Isn't it? Because the summary of Proverbs is what?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So it suddenly struck me this week. Think of how much of our anger. Comes because we revere.

And we fear others. Before the Lord. And think of how much anger comes into your heart and life. Because we fear and revere and respect ourselves.

And our rights. Instead of the Lord. Let me use this phrase again. The fear of the Lord is the knee height perspective on the world.

[ 27 : 01 ] It is bowing before Christ as King. And when you do that. Everything looks different. Everything looks different from a knee height perspective. And so do you know.

There is often very little of our anger. That deserves to remain. So much of our anger. Is because we want our own way.

Don't we? And the fear of the Lord says. Your will be done. Not mine. And when my will is changed. So often. Anger begins to wane. It seems to me the Lord's prayer is the deepest and most profound kind of anger management. Fear the Lord.

Care about what he thinks. And what he says. And what he wants. Not what I want. And the fear of the Lord will help us to see that God's anger. Matters more than ours.

[ 27 : 59 ] God's anger matters more than ours. Lastly. Some of our anger is right. Lots of our anger is wrong. All of God's anger is just. Lastly. All of God's anger is just. Some of the offences against us we can let go.

Can't we? That's a beautiful thing to do. But to do that with absolutely everything. Would not be beautiful. In fact it would be profoundly wrong. So you know that you do not commit high treason against a monarch and get away with it.

And no one would think that was right. You and me and our little kingdoms and small corners which we often fight to protect. As if we are kings and queens. Well yes that is one thing. But if you attempt to dethrone the rightful ruler of the universe.

The ruler who is wise and just and kind and gentle and good. Then what we all want to know. And what we all need. Is a ruler who will not stand idly by and let it happen.

But who will judge. And that is what will happen one day. All sin and evil in our world is the attempt of our human race to dethrone God.

[ 29 : 08 ] To remove him from being in charge of the world and our lives. And one day God will put it right. And some of that sin and evil. Will crush.

Will crush and break some people in the world. Beyond what any court of justice or European court of appeal will ever be able to put right. Beyond that. And it's very likely that some of you tonight.

Are living here with some form of terrible injustice against you. We're often naive to think that isn't the case. But I expect it is in a group this size. And it's no mere personal slight.

No little insult. But what has been done to you has been wrong. And it's life altering proportions. So listen to what Proverbs says. Chapter 20 and verse 22. Do not say I will pay you.

Wait for the Lord and he will deliver you. Chapter 25 and 21 to 22. If your enemy is hungry give him bread to eat. And if he is thirsty give him water to drink.

[ 30 : 14 ] What? If your enemy is hungry give him bread to eat. If he is thirsty give him water to drink. For you will heap burning coals on his head. And the Lord will reward you.

What is that? It's the transformation of our anger isn't it? It's the healing of our anger. It's the perspective of our anger. Judgment is coming.

It is coming. And the king who judges. He will be wise. And he will be righteous. And he will be upright. And he will be good. So take your anger to him. And leave it with him. Leave it with him to judge.

And while you wait. Do something surprising. Do something which no one else. Apart from God. Will ever tell you to do with your anger.

Turn it inside out. Turn it inside out. And serve the person who has made you angry. Look at chapter 25 again. Serve your enemy.

[ 31 : 12 ] And I think the way to understand the burning coals of verse 22 is this. They are pictures of burning pangs of shame. Burning pangs of shame.

That a person will feel when good is returned for evil. And their shame producing remorse and repentance. When the enemy has steeled himself to meet hate with hate.

And is impervious to the threats of revenge. He is vulnerable to a generosity which overlooks, forgives and capitulates the kindness. Let me read that again. Our anger cannot produce that.

Only our gentleness can. And God says to you and I. Leave the anger of vengeance to me. For I can exercise it rightly. Justly. You see anger in my hands will in all likelihood become blind revenge and disproportionate.

But in God's hand it will always be right. And so what I do in the meantime is I meet the obstacle and the blockade in my path. With love.

[ 32 : 38 ] Let's turn as we finish to Ephesians 5. Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4. 17-32. Some of you will study this in high school. Some of you will watch. Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4.

We'll read from verse 25. it's all about putting off and putting on Ephesians 4 verse 25 therefore having put away falsehood let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor for who remembers one another be angry and do not sin do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil let the thief no longer steal rather let him labor do an honest work with his own hands so that he might have something to share with anyone in need let no corrupting talk come out of your bowers but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may

give grace to those who hear and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slam them be put away from you do you see that?

verse 26 be angry and do not sin verse 31 put it away be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another is God in Christ forgiving you only ending ending ending