

Godly Wrath vs. Human Anger

Let's focus upon a few of the events surrounding the Feast of Trumpets and consider a question as to how God will handle some of those things.

***Revelation 6: 12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.
13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.
14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.
15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,
16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!
17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"***

The leaders of humanity are hiding, seeking to shield, protect and save themselves in some way from the wrath of the Lamb.

***Revelation 11: 15 Then the seventh angel sounded:
And there were loud voices in heaven, saying,
"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"
16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,
18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,
And those who fear Your name, small and great,
And should destroy those who destroy the earth."***

The nations were angry that God's wrath had come. The day is characterised by a day of wrath.

***Revelation 19: 11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.
12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.
13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.
15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***

Christ is going to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God! John was not creating a new concept when he wrote those words. It was a concept that had already been stated by the prophets throughout the Old Testament.

The period of time that is coming is described throughout God's Word as the time of the wrath of Almighty God. The concept of treading the winepress of the fierceness and anger of Almighty God is referred to in the prophets as well. Jeremiah talks about this world having to drink of the cup that God has prepared for them -- the wrath of God.

All humanity is going to experience it. Revelation 11:18 tells us that the nations will be angry when God's wrath comes. The term "wrath" is an old English word for emotion that we would normally call "anger." In fact, it is interesting to look at the way these two words juxtapose to one another in verse 18, because they are basically from the same Greek root. One is a noun and the other is a verb. The translators translated one as "anger," and the other as "wrath." The nations are angry, and God has wrath. The same emotion is being expressed.

How can God be angry? How can He be so full of wrath and avoid sinning? If human beings expressed anger to that extent sin is very, very close. How can God be angry and not sin?

You and I are warned, time and time again, to watch anger because it can be detrimental to our eternal life. How do you reconcile the fact that God can describe this day as the day of His anger?

Notice the problems that Moses created for himself. There is a type and a lesson for us in being able to control anger. As a result of unbridled anger, Moses missed out on the physical Promised Land -- as did the children of Israel, because of their anger.

Numbers 20: 1 Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

Like so much of their journeying in the wilderness they encountered yet another common problem. The area was a wilderness for a reason -- there was no water! There was no water for millions of people, livestock and animals to be watered by. As was the case of Israel when they didn't have what they wanted to have, they complained.

2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

3 And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!"

4 "Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?"

5 "And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."

6 So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them.

7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

8 "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals."

The Eternal told Moses to go out and speak to the rock, and then He would provide water.

What happened?

9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

The Eternal had to correct Moses.

12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

"... because you allowed your emotion to get the better of you, and as a result of that, you belittled My name, you are not going to get into the Promised Land. That has now been denied you."

13 This was the water of Meribah (which means strife), because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.

Psalm 106 describes this event and the way in which God viewed the action of Moses:

***Psalm 106: 28 They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor,
And ate sacrifices made to the dead.
29 Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds,
And the plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas stood up and intervened,
And the plague was stopped.
31 And that was accounted to him for righteousness
To all generations forevermore.
32 They angered Him also at the waters of strife,
So that it went ill with Moses on account of them;
33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit,
So that he spoke rashly with his lips.***

Moses allowed his emotions and his anger to get the better of him. As a result of that God said he was not going to have the opportunity of entering the physical Promised Land -- as an example to all people that He would call; so that they might learn to control anger.

Moses struck the rock twice when He had been commanded to speak to it. God didn't tell him to strike the rock at all. All he needed to do was to speak to it.

But Moses became personal towards the people. He took their problems on in a way that was inappropriate. He let it get to his emotions. As a result, his emotions controlled his actions and his speech. Moses "let it all hang out" in expressing his anger towards those people.

This aspect of the destructiveness of anger is a lesson that is taught throughout Scripture.

***Genesis 4: 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,
5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering ...***

There was something about the way that Cain's offering was presented that God did not accept.

***5 ... And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.
6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?
7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door ...***

"There is sin there, and your anger in some ways, is an expression of that unresolved sin. It is something that has to be addressed. You are becoming angry with your brother."

7 ... And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

"It's going to rule you, unless you learn to rule it."

Did he learn to rule it? Or did it rule him?

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Cain became the first murderer. What was the cause of that murder? Anger!

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

"Do I have to be concerned about him?"

The word that is translated "anger" in the New King James Version, or "wrath" in the Authorised Version

indicates a sense of heat, or the onset of anger. People talk of being "hot under the collar." This is the first recorded account of someone becoming hot under the collar, and not knowing how to control it.

Anger misused prevents you from being your brother's keeper. A very important question that God asked Cain was, "*Where is Abel your brother?*"

Cain said, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

The rest of God's word echoes the concept, "*Yes I am my brother's keeper.*"

We should note the first problem with anger is that it prevents us from being our brother's keeper.

Jacob, on his death-bed, brought his sons before him and prophesied about them according to their character and the understanding of what God was doing through those men.

***Genesis 49: 5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.
6 Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.
7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel ...***

He said he wasn't going to leave Simeon and Levi together. They were going to have to be scattered because their anger was so destructive.

***7 ... I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.***

The terminology of the New King James version is interesting. It says that "they slew a man and in self-will they hamstrung on ox." The Authorised Version states:

6 ... in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

... out of sheer cussedness! They were men of great anger.

The term that is translated "wrath" in Genesis 49 is, on the other hand, a term that is used throughout the Old Testament to refer to the Day of the Eternal as being a day of wrath. You might say this was equating the very same wrath that Simeon and Levi had with what God has. Yet God is saying He doesn't want to be around Simeon and Levi because they have a problem with anger.

We could look at a number of other examples of anger being destructive. Ahab expressed sullen anger when Naboth didn't allow him to purchase his vineyard. Ahab sulked in anger. The end result of that anger was the death of Naboth. It was destructive.

In the book of Esther, we can see Haman's anger towards Mordecai and all the Jews.

We could move into the New Testament and look at some examples of people and their uncontrolled anger. We can see a wrong form of anger being expressed at Christ's first coming, as a child, a babe.

***Matthew 2: 1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,
behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,
2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the
East and have come to worship Him."
3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled ...***

... because he was king, and he didn't like rival kings. When Herod was troubled, he was very deeply troubled and he was not a good person to be around. It would normally mean the end of one's life! He was a man who

thought nothing of killing his own sons because he perceived them as being a threat to him. He was a man given over to an incredible degree of paranoia.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

**6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;**

**For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.'"**

7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

**14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt,
15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."**

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry ...

Anger overtook Herod and the end result was the destruction of every child under the age of 2 in Bethlehem and the surrounding area.

16... and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

It was an incredible act of genocide. Herod was a man given to very destructive anger.

Notice the anger that followed the preaching of Steven in Acts 6. The leaders in certain areas set up false witnesses against him.

Acts 6: 11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

13 They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law;

14 "for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

15 And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

That was quite an event! They perceived the man before them as an angel.

Do you see what anger does? Acts 7 records Steven's defence before the Council. He corrected them. He was accused of saying the law was going to be done away.

Acts 7: 51 "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

52 "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

53 "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

"What do you mean by charging me with trying to dispense with the law? You don't even keep it!" That was rather inflammatory!

54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart ...

They were torn in two.

54 ... and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

... expressions of persons experiencing great anger. We see people who became angry lose out on what had been offered to them. We see others being destroyed.

On the other hand, we have seen that God can be angry, and that is not a sin. But when humans get angry, it tends and leads to sin.

Why the difference?

The Day of the Lord is characterised in terms of anger.

Ephesians 5: 1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Then he goes on and talks about the things that they should avoid:

3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

God's wrath is coming upon the children of disobedience for all of those sins that He has told us to avoid. We are not to be partakers with them.

Ephesians 4: 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

The word "anger" is exactly the same word that is used 7 verses later:

Ephesians 5: 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Some people say that the apostle Paul didn't know his own mind. I don't agree with that. I think the apostle Paul understood perfectly well what he was talking about!

Wrath, or anger, is permissible for God. But we are to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking be put away from us. It doesn't become Christians. It is inappropriate.

The aspect of wrath in Ephesians 4:31 relates to the heat or anger BOILING UP within a person. We might use the term "seething" with anger.

God can seethe, but we are not to. God says we are to avoid anger.

We've looked at the human condition, now let us look at God's use of anger and see what we can learn.

Notice a very important statement about the character of God. After Moses had been 40 days in the mountain with the Eternal God, and he had received the tables of stone which God had written with His own finger, he went down the mountain and found the children of Israel in the process of fornication and idolatry with the golden calf. He threw the tablets to the ground and broke them.

God told him to cut 2 more tables of stone and bring them up the mountain, and He would give Moses the law again.

Exodus 34: 5 Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

God described Himself as being merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. What wonderful qualities! Longsuffering means "patient" or "slow to anger," as most modern translations render it. God is saying He does not have a short fuse! He is patient.

God knows how to CONTROL and use His anger for the benefit of His ultimate plan. God doesn't go off half-cocked as human beings might be inclined to do, in terms of their anger. God is slow to anger. You might say He is taking 6,000 years to get there. It's not an instantaneous, volatile act where He just loses it. God is able to control His anger.

Exodus 33: 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.'"

Let's read that from the Tanakh:

Exodus 33: 5 Say to the Israelite people, You are a stiffnecked people. If I were to go in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Leave off your finery and I will consider what to do to you."

Why? Because they were worshipping the golden calf, instead of the God who had brought them out of Egypt.

On a number of other occasions, God's anger against Israel was kindled.

After Balak had come to Balaam to curse Israel, God intervened and told Balaam he was only allowed to say what He (God) permitted him to say. A wonderful blessing was given to Israel.

Balak did all he could to get a curse upon these people, but God would not let him pronounce a curse.

But Balaam did tell Balak of a way in which he himself could curse Israel. That was through idolatry and the adultery that was associated with that. The Moabites invited the Israelites into their worship ...

Numbers 25: 3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

"Let's stop this. Let's nip it in the bud, lest I have to destroy these people totally."

We could look at other occasions in which the children of Israel provoked God.

Numbers 32: 10 "So the LORD'S anger was aroused on that day, and He swore an oath, saying, 11 'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me,

12 'except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'

13 "So the LORD'S anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone.

14 "And look! You have risen in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel.

15 "For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

Paul talked about the way in which the children of Israel provoked God to anger:

Hebrews 3: 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Hebrews 4: 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath (anger), 'They shall not enter My rest ...

The Israelites' provoking of God to anger prevented them from entering into the Promised Land.

We must understand the anger and wrath of God leads to something besides the venting or expressing of emotion. It does something much more important.

Isaiah 12: 1 And in that day you will say ...

Immediately one's antennae should be up! What is "that day?" It is prophetic shorthand for "The Day of the Eternal."

**1 ... "O LORD, I will praise You;
Though You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.
2 Behold, God is my salvation
I will trust and not be afraid;
'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song;
He also has become my salvation.'"**

What is Isaiah really saying? God's anger exists for an ultimate purpose -- to bring people to salvation!

Have you ever seen a person so angry they want to SAVE someone? Most times when I see people who are angry, they want to DESTROY someone! They want to remove the very memory of that person.

But here Isaiah links God's anger with salvation; a totally different concept.

**3 Therefore with joy you will draw water
From the wells of salvation.
4 And in that day you will say:
"Praise the LORD, call upon His name;
Declare His deeds among the peoples,
Make mention that His name is exalted.
5 Sing to the LORD,
For He has done excellent things;
This is known in all the earth.
6 Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion,
For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"**

In this wonderful section of Scripture the anger of God is shown as being something that He uses to bring people to salvation.

Continuing from Isaiah 12 into Isaiah 13, it talks about the anger and wrath of God, and WHY God is going to have to use anger.

**Isaiah 13: 1 The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.
2 "Lift up a banner on the high mountain,**

*Raise your voice to them;
Wave your hand, that they may enter the gates of the nobles.
9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes,
Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger,
To lay the land desolate;
And He will destroy its sinners from it.*

God has a problem with sinners! His anger is expressed against sinners, not against humanity.

*10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations
Will not give their light;
The sun will be darkened in its going forth,
And the moon will not cause its light to shine.
11 "I will punish the world for its evil,
And the wicked for their iniquity;
I will halt the arrogance of the proud,
And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.
12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold,
A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.
13 Therefore I will shake the heavens,
And the earth will move out of her place,
In the wrath of the LORD of hosts
And in the day of His fierce anger.*

What is it that God's wrath and anger is focused upon? It is focused upon sin.

Some people are intertwined with sin. They will not put sin away from them, and as a consequence, they suffer. It is a very different use of anger than human beings express.

*James 1: 19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (anger);
20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

God's instruction is that we lengthen that fuse as far as is possible. Why? So we can avoid the wrong sort of anger. We can become a little more like the Eternal Himself. Why does God want us to lengthen that fuse? Because the wrath of man, the anger of humanity, does not produce the righteousness of God!

Anger is supposed to produce righteousness. That's an interesting concept. That's what God seeks to do with His anger -- produce righteousness, not destruction.

Why can the wrath or anger of humans not work the righteousness of God?

Firstly, it's an expression of the self. You are not getting what you want.

A parent gets angry with a child for what he has done. Why? There are many reasons parents get angry with children, many of which are totally invalid. A child can let the parent down. It may not meet up to the parent's expectations. It is not an unknown phenomena amongst parents to have unreasonable expectations of children. "Somebody else's child can do it, so why can't mine?" Parents want their children to keep up with everybody else's kids.

Parents can sometimes find themselves in a case where they are getting angry because a child does not perform at the level they want and expect it to. Parents can have excessive expectations of children.

On the other hand, a child may have the ability, but the parents don't provide the children with the training, the skills or the discipline to be able to accomplish something. But the poor child feels the wrath of the parent, because the parent has unfulfilled expectations. The child becomes the focus of a parent's frustration.

What does this do? It DESTROYS A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARENT AND THE CHILD. It's very destructive.

Can a parent be angry with a child? Strictly speaking, no -- because if there is a reason to be angry with a child, the anger really needs to be focused elsewhere. It needs to be focused on the PROBLEM, and not necessarily the CHILD. It needs to be focused somewhere else.

A child CANNOT OVERCOME if it becomes the focus of the anger. It needs to see what the problem is. It needs to understand what it has got to overcome, and how to go about it. That is why, when a child is corrected, we encourage parents to express love towards the child, so that the child can come to realise that it is not it itself that is the problem, but that it is their actions or behaviour. It is something that they can control, maybe with the parents' help -- or something that it can achieve, with a little more accomplishment on its part.

So often parents become angry with children and they destroy the relationship.

The anger of humanity does not produce the righteousness of God. The anger of human beings becomes destructive to righteousness. What is righteousness all about? It's about relationships. It's about a relationship that one has with God and with our fellow human beings.

Parents can destroy that relationship. They can be involved in a situation where they are destroying a relationship that they ought to be building.

The same holds true in marriage. Spouses can get pretty mad about the shortcomings of their mate. They may have some horrible shortcomings, but if your anger is expressed towards the individual, you are eventually going to destroy the relationship. The anger, if it is going to be expressed, needs to be expressed towards the shortcoming. If it's a sin, it can be expressed towards the sin. That's a great lesson that has to be learned.

God expresses His anger towards sin and its manifestation, rather than a person. Human beings focus their anger upon an individual.

Note the sense of anger that has been associated with September 11th. Certainly there is cause for grief. Many people are understandably caught up in that, but for many people it is also an aspect of anger, and that anger is expressed towards other people. You might say it finds expression in terms of vengeance.

Very few people stop and ask, *"Why did God allow it to happen to us? Why didn't God protect us from it? Where have we fallen short that this might happen to us?"*

There is a lesson to be learned. Anger has to be expressed towards sin and its manifestation, rather than towards a person. If it is expressed towards a person, it becomes destructive to both parties, because it destroys the relationship. If that is a spiritual relationship it destroys a righteous relationship.

God, on the other hand, is not concerned about destroying relationships. God can do something that you and I can't. He can take a person's life and He can give it back to them! God is going to use His anger to take people's lives, but He is going to give life back to them again in an environment, and under conditions where they can start to build a relationship with God.

So ultimately speaking it is not a destructive anger. God can take a person out of the way and say, *"Look, you've got yourself so much into this, that it is going to be better for you to be in another environment -- an environment where Satan can't take advantage of you. I am going to let you rest awhile, and you will come up in a resurrection."*

You and I can't do that! We don't have that prerogative, yet at times we would like to "play God." Our anger can become so fierce that we would like to see another person dead. We wish they were removed from the face of the earth. That is not godly anger. That is not the type of anger that God requires of us.

God wants to create relationships.

2 Peter 3: 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

... and, as a result of repentance, God wants people to have life. That's His purpose. He has a plan whereby that can come about.

Peter talks about God being longsuffering towards us. That is the same context that was mentioned in Exodus 34:6 -- being longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish. God is very slow -- 6,000 years slow!

God warns us about anger ...

Ecclesiastes 7: 9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry ...

Don't be angry quickly.

9 ... For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Is that why people get angry -- to get it off their chests? No! It's still there! "Anger rests in the bosom of fools." They develop an angry character.

We have talked about overt anger -- the way in which people express themselves to one another. But people can also be angry in other ways. The focus may not be on the person, but on a wrong aspect where the anger is misplaced.

A few years ago doctrinal heresy came into the Church. As a result of that, many people became angry. What became the focus of their anger? In some cases it was on individuals, offices and institutions -- rather than the godlessness of the doctrine. The focus was in the wrong place.

People have internalised anger as a result of that. Many people sit at home today keeping the Sabbath by themselves because they are not willing to trust another person to be a minister, or they are not prepared to trust another institution.

I am glad that you are here and that you are prepared to trust me! Thank you very much for that.

I also realise, above all else, that we in the ministry occupy a position that no other human beings will ever be entrusted with. It is a strange thing to consider that we occupy an office that will never be entrusted to a human being in the future.

It is an office the sons of God will occupy! They will have physical aids and helps. But it is a numbing responsibility to realise that I occupy a position that will eventually be occupied by a member of the God family. God entrusts me with that at this point in time. I have a responsibility to make sure I exercise that in the most godly way possible.

I can sin! I can miss the mark, just as Moses and Aaron did, just as Peter, Thomas or Paul did, or as anyone else has done before me.

Where is the focus?

Many of these people focused on the wrong thing. They have internalised their anger against the ministry and against institutions. They occupy what they call the Living Room Church of God. People may be in the Living Room Church of God for many reasons, but oftentimes some of it relates to unresolved anger; anger against the wrong thing.

There is no question that the doctrine was wrong, but the anger should have been against the heresy, not against the people or the institution.

Having unresolved anger destroys the chance of a godly relationship with others. If you have unresolved anger, what does it lead to? It leads to bitterness. It is corrosive. It destroys from within. It destroys the potential for a relationship.

Oftentimes people have ended up throwing out the baby with the bath-water. Yes, the bath-water sure needed throwing out -- but the baby needed to be kept!

Notice what the apostle Paul had to say to the Church at Ephesus in relation to anger. He talks about the changes that people have to undergo -- that you and I as Christians, just as the Ephesians, had to experience.

Ephesians 4: 20 But you have not so learned Christ,

We have not so learned Christ according to the uncleanness of the past. That wasn't the truth of Christ.

***21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:
22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,
23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,***

The calling of a Christian is one of renewing the mind, having the mind of God.

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

James 1 says that the anger of man works not the righteousness of God. That obviously means that if we have been created in the new man which is created according to God in true righteousness and holiness, something has got to happen to human anger. The anger that human beings experience, that ruins their lives, has to be disposed of.

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

We are our brother's keeper!

***26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,
27 nor give place to the devil.***

In the next verse Paul gives an example of how we are to change:

***28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.
29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.
30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.
32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.***

The end result of the Christian life is very changed relationships -- relationships which are built, not destroyed.

Let's look at some of those points. Verse 26 was taken from Psalm 4. Let's read Psalm 4 from some different translations.

***Psalm 4: 4 (New Revised Standard Version) When you are disturbed (or angry), do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Selah (Stop and consider).
5 Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.***

The Darby translation says:

***Psalm 4: 4 Be moved with anger, and sin not; meditate in your own hearts upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
5 Offer sacrifices of righteousness, and confide in Jehovah (the Almighty).***

Anger can be used rightly, but God tells us to put a time limit on it. Don't allow it to consume you.

What do people do? They lie awake at night, tossing and turning, thinking of how they can placate their anger by getting even with the other person. They destroy their own lives. They destroy the other person's life.

God says we should put a time limit, a cap, on it. Why? Because the problem is ultimately God's. He has the power to correct. You and I don't.

You and I don't have the power to change sin or evil in this world.

We are told to offer right sacrifices -- or offer righteousness, and put our trust in the Eternal. It is His problem, not ours. He can take care of it. I don't have to burden myself with it. I don't have to allow it to consume me. It is His.

Ephesians 4: 27 nor give place to the devil.

Unresolved anger in our lives very quickly gives place to the devil. Nothing has changed from Genesis 4. Cain didn't deal with the anger in his life. As a result Satan got the upper hand of him.

The apostle Paul tells us not to give place to the devil. Putting it in God's hands means that we can avoid Satan taking advantage of our emotions, and leading us into sin. We can keep the right perspective.

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

What often happens as a result of anger? Have you ever noticed what people say when they are angry? It's hurtful. It's destructive. It's injurious.

I can remember when the events of 1994 / 1995 were happening. I read things from people and I said, "*I know you are hurting, but this is not a godly way of handling it.*" Sadly, in many cases, they were people who should have known better. Oftentimes they were people who had taught me! That was the very sad thing.

So often anger leads to corrupt words proceeding from our mouth. God says it is not to be that way! Those corrupt words are very destructive.

Notice the way the Psalmist characterised Moses' behaviour:

***Psalm 106: 32 They angered Him also at the waters of strife,
So that it went ill with Moses on account of them;
33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit,
So that he spoke rashly with his lips.***

He didn't control his language. The corrupt communication started coming out of Moses' mouth, rather than something that was to the honour and the glory of God.

It doesn't mean that we have to suppress anger in any shape or form, but we should leave the problems in God's hands. We have to literally let go of it, because the battle is really the Eternal's. It is not ours. If we try and fight the battle we end up becoming counter-productive and destructive. It's not our battle.

Anger is an emotion that God has created so that we can have a mind like His. The problem is, that our minds have been hijacked by Satan, so the emotions that God have given to us become misused.

The challenge for each and every one of us with God's Spirit is that we need to complete that mind and make it like the mind of God. The emotions that God has given to us, anger included, need to be used in a way that is acceptable to God. It requires that we use and develop our emotions in a way which is pleasing to God.

Neither suppression, nor the unbridled lack of control is a godly use of emotion. Emotions have to be used in a godly manner.

When Jesus Christ returns to this earth, as the King of kings, He will be filled with the wrath of God. Is it just for the sake of destroying people? No. That's not the purpose at all. The purpose is to remove evil from this world, so that humanity can accomplish the purpose that God created it to accomplish in the first instance; so that we can grow and develop the mind of God -- not just you and me today, but all of humanity can have the access to that.

You and I can have the mind of God.

God's anger is focused on that which is evil.

Where is our anger focused?

...Peter Nathan

14 Sept 02