

Wholly Sanctified: Part 2 // Anger & Contentment (Peace)

INTRO

We continue our study tonight on Emotions.

Sunday we laid the foundation on the place and role of emotions in life.

It was an important base for looking at specific emotions over the next couple Weds & Suns.

If you weren't here, I urge you to be sure to go online and watch/listen to it.

Tonight

From here on out we'll be looking at specific emotions.

There's no way we can cover all of them, but we will examine the ones most frequently dealt with.

Tonight, we'll look at Anger & Contentment.

And we begin in an interesting place; Psalm 139.

Psalms

Written mostly by David, many of the Psalms are expression of great emotion.

You can't read David's story without realizing he was an *intensely* emotional guy.

David did nothing small. Everything he did, he did **big**.

He was always, all in.

When he was good, he was very, very good. And when he was bad, he was awful!

Many of the Psalms he wrote are expression of his intense emotions.

Some are exuberant exultations of God's glory. // Others are dirges of grief-filled lament.

Some are angry tirades against foes // Others a celebration of friendship.

One rises to the pinnacle of joy / Another descends to the pit of despair.

Psalm 139

Psalm 139 is a case in point and the perfect starting place in our examination of anger.

Watch for the **abrupt change in tone** that takes place here. Take note of the verse it appears.

Remember, this is a song; it was sung. So: Where's the key change.

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹ O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.

² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.

³ You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

⁵ You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

⁶ *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot *attain* it.

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.

⁹ *If* I take the wings of the morning, *And* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;

¹² Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.

¹³ For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well.

15 **My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.**

16 **Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them.**

17 **How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!**

18 ***If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.**

19 **Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.**

20 **For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take *Your name* in vain.**

21 **Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?**

22 **I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.**

23 **Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;**

24 **And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.**

Where's the key-change? → v19

In v23, David returns to the theme of vs 1-18.

But vs 19-22 seem completely out of context to the rest of the Psalm.

Jordan will return to this passage Sunday as he deals with Hate.

But there's anger here as well.

Anger & Hate that are the spark that lit David's fuse to compose this.

THAT'S where the ***emotion*** is in this Psalm.

It's what we see David DOING here that makes this so instructive.

Something's happen to set David off.

Wicked men have turned their schemes to oppose God & he's livid.

He HATES these guys and is ANGRY at their rebellion.

Then it occurs to him: Wait! What's God's take on all this?

Does GOD hate them? Is He angry and ready to smoke them?

As he ponders that, the goodness of God's intention toward him comes to mind.

And how he can't hide his inner life from God.

He may be able to hide it from other people, but not God.

As David ponders God's many thoughts toward him, he grows uncomfortable with his thoughts toward these wicked dudes.

Maybe the way David feels ***isn't*** the way God does // Maybe David's emotions & God's don't align.

OR worse; maybe they do!

And truth be told, David's closer to the wicked ones he hates than God.

In which case, maybe God's super ticked with him too.

So he ends, "Search me, God. Know my innermost being. Put me to the test to lay bare my fears. If there's anything in me not aligned with you, show me so I can repent."

What David does in Psalm 139 is precisely what we need to do with our emotions.

See them as invitations into deeper intimacy with God.

Remember the major point from our study Sunday.

God intended emotions to be ***responders to*** and ***affirms of*** right, wise choices.

They were never meant to ***drive*** choice, so that we decide to do this or that ***TO GET*** an emotion.

We decide what to do because it's right and good; it aligns with God's will.

Emotions then flow ***from*** that decision.

Because the Fall flipped us as spirit-soul-body human beings upside-down, living in an upside-down world of upside-down people, emotions will settle over us contrary to what we **want**.

When they do, instead of just seeking an escape, we ought to USE them as a way to get closer to God.

That's what David does in Psalm 139.

He's angry. Filled with hatred. And there seems to be good cause.

But he's not sure, sensing the way he feels is out of alignment with God.

So he sets it all before God and asks Him to sort it out.

Anger

Let's turn now to look specifically at anger; an emotion of potentially far-reaching consequence → Eph 4.

In this room & online are people for whom anger *isn't* a problem.

They get angry, but it doesn't get them in trouble because it fuels neither speech nor behavior.

Others have an anger-**problem**. It **DOES** get them in trouble → They **rage!**

Saying hurtful things // Becoming violent.

But there's another, *more subtle* way anger works harm than thru violence.

We'll see that that is a bit later.

For now, let's take a look at Eph 4:26

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

Oh how we wish Paul had just said, "Be angry." → Some of us have that part down! // We excel there.

In fact, let's start there.

Paul takes it as a given anger is a *legitimate*, an *appropriate* emotion in some situations.

We **ought** to be angry at injustice & evil.

We **ought** to be angry when the innocent are abused.

It's **right** to be angry at the cancer ravaging a loved one.

But we must exercise caution in the actions that anger prompts.

We see this perfectly demonstrated in Jesus.

In John 2, He visits the temple at the outset of His public ministry.

Like Mos Eisley, it was a "wretched hive of scum & villainy."

He said the corruption of the leaders had turned that most holy place into a profane mall.

John 2:13–17 • ¹³ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. ¹⁵ When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" ¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

Question: Is Jesus angry here? → You betcha!

Why? → What's caused His anger?

That's an important question; **THE** question really.

This is the first step in the course prescribed by Paul in Eph 4:26 when he says, "Be angry, and do not sin."

When anger starts, ask what's prompting it.

Remember: Emotions are supposed to be **responders**.

So, *what's* this anger *responding* to?

Causes of Anger

The causes of anger are legion.

But they can be roughly divided into two categories:

Injustice & Selfishness.

Injustice

Anger at injustice is right & proper.

It's what we see in Jesus here.

God was being defamed by the abhorrent behavior of corrupt leaders & crass marketers all looking to make a shekel off people who just came to the temple to worship God.

But when they got there, they were ripped off by a slick system that turned them from worshippers into victims.

It left people who WANTED to give God glory with the impression religion was a scam.

And since what we believe about God is THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT US, Jesus was furious at what was happening – IN GOD'S NAME !!

Anger at injustice is proper, good, holy.

Psalm 7:11 says God is angry with the wicked every day.

The injustice that's the target of righteous anger can take many forms.

Too many for us to list.

Selfishness

The other main category that causes anger is selfishness.

We don't get our way.

The baldest example of that is a child deprived of a toy, cookie, or something else they want.

They throw a fit!

As we get older, that same urge to anger at not getting our way becomes more sophisticated.

We don't throw fits because if we do we're called childish.

So we find other ways to express our anger.

Revenge.

The silent treatment.

Sulking.

Rumor mongering.

Character assassination.

The Question

The point is, when anger BEGINS, it essential we ask what it's from. What's sparked it?

If it's *mere* selfishness, we need to repent.

And note I said "*mere*" selfishness. → We'll come back to that in a bit.

If it's a stich where I just didn't get my way so I'm mad, I need to repent and ask God to forgive.

If anger is at genuine injustice, we need to then figure out what we're to do about it.

That's what Jesus did. → Watch =

¹⁵ When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

He made a whip. [Explain]

16 And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” **17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”**

To measured action that addressed the abuse, Jesus added carefully selected words.

No *obscenities*.

No *angry vitriol* meant to hurt people because Jesus was hurt.

What Jesus **SAID** gave context to His actions so those effected by them understood **WHY** He did them.

Jesus isn’t the only one who exhibited holy anger.

So did Saul, first king of Israel.

In 1 Sam 11, the Ammonites attacked an innocent city, threatening to commit an atrocity on its people.

When Saul heard the news, we read ...

6 Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused.

He then rallied Israel to relieve the city.

Don’t miss the connection between God’s Spirit and Saul’s anger.

Saul’s anger was good and right because it was the result of the Spirit’s influence.

When we find ourselves angry at injustice, we still ask after the *target* of the anger.

James 1:20 says the wrath *of man* does not produce the righteousness of God.

Where was Jesus’ anger *directed*? He didn’t bust anyone in the chops.

His anger went into removing the very thing that was the problem – the marketplace.

Man’s wrath just aims at making the man who vents it *feel* better.

Here’s the template for our anger.

Step 1: What’s caused this anger?

Selfishness? = Immediate Repentance

Injustice? = Proceed to Step 2

Step 2: What action & words are appropriate to address the injustice?

Step 3: Follow thru = Do it!

Now: There’s an important caveat to this.

What about when the injustice, abuse, mistreatment, whatever, is directed AT US?

It’s a *mix* of BOTH injustice and selfishness.

The answer is to tamp down the anger coming from mere selfishness so that the injustice can be dealt with.

Example: A husband’s speech to his wife is harsh, critical, demeaning. It hurts her.

She gets angry and withdraws, giving him the silent treatment.

But he just turns it up till she screams at him and they have a brutal fight.

Her anger is BOTH selfish and just.

It’s just because what he’s doing is wrong! He ought not speak to her that way.

His God-ordained duty as a husband is to protect and cherish his wife.

He’s definitely NOT doing that. He’s doing the opposite.

But her anger rises from her not getting what she wants, and truth be told, has a *right* to want.

The problem is, as long as her anger is EXPRESSED FROM that place, it’s going to only do more damage.

Here’s what she *needs* to do.

Step *back* from the anger flowing from not getting what she wants,

INTO an anger at the brokenness of her husband that has made him verbally abusive.

She stops letting his behavior dictate hers.

She instead prayerfully seeks God for how to help her husband conquer that brokenness.

The anger shifts from her husband to the sin and becomes fuel for fervent prayer.

As we go through life, we'll find most of the causes of anger are due to mere selfishness.

More rare is genuine injustice that sparks our ire.

Discerning, then negotiating the times when it's a mix of both requires that we be walking in the Spirit.

Rage

I want to speak now to those for whom anger is a real problem. → You rage.

Often. // Or maybe infrequently. But when you go off, it's bad!

When you rage, it's scary. You scare people.

You've wounded them; a spouse, children, one-time friends who aren't anymore because they don't have to put up with you and your tirades.

As a follower of Jesus, you know it's wrong to rage, blow up, go off.

And you've tried to stop, but so far, no luck.

In fact, it seems the more you try to stop, the worse it gets.

Remember: Emotions are an invitation into deeper intimacy with God.

The rage may very well be but a symptom of a deeper problem.

Trying to stop the outbursts is just putting a band-aid on a shotgun wound.

You need to get at the root problem causing the uncontrollable anger.

An illustration, then I'll share my story of dealing with anger.

Bad Breath

Brittany has bad breath. Reeksville!

She brushes her teeth.

Has checked her diet to see if there's something going on there.

Can't figure it out.

So she uses mouthwash and breath fresheners.

But frankly, nothing helps. She still regularly clears rooms.

Finally, at a routine dentist appointment one day, she discovers the cause. → A bad tooth.

A root canal later, no more bad-breath.

If you have an anger problem, it's like due to a brokenness inside that needs to be healed; a lie the enemy told you years ago that's taken root in your soul that needs to be exposed and replaced by truth.

My Story

I had an anger problem. I raged.

At first, it was most often expressed at work.

I was young & immature when I was made a manager where I worked.

The employees were also young and immature.

I learned early on that when I got angry, they quit their shenanigans and got back to work.

I never got physical with them, but I did throw things and hurl nasty words.

I quickly discovered hitting walls with my fist was an effective way to re-assert control.

In a word, anger **Worked!**

Then I got married and we had our first child.

The tool I used at work I began using at home.

When I felt myself losing control, I raged.

But the effect it was having on my family wasn't good. I could see it.

I determined to stop. → You know – Just stop it. Easy-peasy.

Hardly. The more I tried to stop, the more aware I became of a low-simmering anger in my all the time, just waiting to come out.

One day while driving just after an outburst, I pleaded with God to make it stop.

I sensed Him tell me the anger wasn't the problem, just a symptom of the real problem.

That made sense. So I asked him what the problem was.

All I got back was a quiet, "I can't. Not yet. You're not ready."

I realized the reason God couldn't show me the problem was because if I saw it then it'd ruin me.

I prayed, "I have to know, so do whatever You have to, to make me ready."

If you've ever had an encounter with God like that, you know the whole thing lasted just a few seconds.

A deep peace settled over me that God heard and would answer my prayer.

The next several months were difficult as the Spirit did some deep work in me revealing things I'd hidden.

Hurts I'd suppressed.

Lies I'd allowed to grow and build a fake identity.

Emotions are an invitation by God into deeper intimacy with Him and that's precisely what happened over that time.

Then it happened.

One day again while driving, my mind somewhere else, the Spirit said, "Are you ready?"

I immediately knew what that meant. If God was asking me if I was ready, I was.

Knowing this is was going to be difficult, I composed myself and prayed, "Show me."

He did. My problem, what drove the anger, was my **need** to be in control.

I said God was my God, but in truth, **I** was seated on the throne. **I** ruled.

Jesus was good to get me into heaven, but when it came to calling the shots – that was all me.

I had a mental picture of me sitting on a grand throne, trying to control everything.

It wasn't working, so I was **furious & frustrated**. → Because I never **could** rule.

The throne didn't belong to me. It's God's throne. He alone has the right to sit there.

And the Spirit was right. I **wasn't** ready before to see that. I was barely now.

I was undone! The tears flowed. I was physically weak.

Over the next several days, the implications of that revelation worked their way through my soul.

I repented of the lie I was in control and asked God to teach me to gladly submit to Him in all things.

Guess what! The anger dissolved. There was simply no need for it any longer.

I didn't need to use it to reassert control because I wasn't in control. That's God's job.

From that day to this, the rage that was so much a part of my life before is gone.

I'm not saying there aren't times when I lose my cool. I do.

But nothing like back then.

And in those infrequent times I do, it's because the old lie comes back round.

It knocks to see if I want to let it in and reminisce. I don't.

You

That was MY battle with anger. → Yours is yours and may very well be due to some other cause.

The point is, the anger is a **symptom**.

A **responder** to something deeper.

See it as an invitation into deeper intimacy with God. // Then **take** that invitation.

General Verses

A couple verses to ponder ...

Ecc 7:9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Regret is a constant-companion of the angry.

The person easily provoked to wrath does and says things they which they could take back.
If you have a short fuse, time to do some work.

Pro 29:22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.

Anger isn't only manifested in outbursts.

A more subtle way it shows up is in contention and strife.

Some have learned they're **ignored** when they throw a fit.

So they express their anger by being a trouble-maker, getting people worked up.

They're a mess inside and figure if **they** are, everyone else ought to be too.

"If **I'm** miserable, **you** should be miserable."

Ask them *why* they cause trouble; they're **angry** at something.

They hope by stirring the pot, **others** will get angry, and that will be the opportunity for them to share what **THEY'RE** angry about.

Listen: We are devious little sinners! // Complex to the hilt.

And we'll remain a mystery till we **TAKE** the invitation of our emotions and enter into deeper intimacy with God.

Contentment

Most emotions have a *counter*-emotion.

Happy - Sad // Love - Hate

The counter to Anger is *Contentment*.

Anger says something's *wrong* & needs to be made right.

Contentment says things are *right*; as they *should* be.

Living in a fallen world, contentment might seem impossible. → It isn't.

Because sitting on His omniscient & omnipotent throne is our Sovereign God.

And He is able to make all things work together for good, for those who are the called according to His promise.

Yes, the world is fallen. Humanity is in rebellion.

But because God is God, He still directs the course of History to the end He's ordained.

All things WILL work out. God wins and because we're His people we'll stand with Him in that victory.

This is the faith that sets our hearts at ease; the truth that bequeaths us contentment.

It's why Paul could write in Phil 4,

¹¹ I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ... ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

In writing his protégé Timothy in 1 Tim 6, he said,

⁶ Godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

These are the words that come right before that famous passage ...

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds* of evil, ...

By calling for contentment with Burgers & Birkenstocks, he's not prohibiting ambition or drive.

He's saying, be content where you are.

Don't make contentment contingent on **more**; more money, more power, more stuff.

Contentment isn't provided by what's out there.

It's knowing who you are and why you're here.

The best verse to that end is Heb 13:5

⁵ **Let your conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*"**