

Attention:

The danger of anger is not just losing your temper; the danger is misrepresenting God while operating with a bad attitude. People are exhausted. Families are stressed. Churches are tired. Leaders are burned out. Many believers know what God said, but pressure has pushed them into reacting emotionally instead of responding spiritually.

In this passage, Moses had carried people for years. He dealt with complaints, rebellion, murmuring, and disrespect. Then **one moment of anger caused him to mishandle one thing** God told him to do.

Need:

Do you have sudden or explosive episodes of anger? Explosive emotions are when your emotions are impulsive and sudden; you can do more harm than help. **Behind often reactionary emotions is disappointment.** This passage shows how believers who continue to complain in their (wilderness) journey and how displays of anger and disobedience have serious consequences, even though God still provides for His people.

Background:

Numbers is a book of numbering or counting of the Israelites. The English title “Numbers” comes from the two censuses that are central features of this book. However, the Hebrew title, “In the Wilderness,” is more descriptive of the book. Numbers show how God’s people traveled from Mount Sinai to the border of the Promised Land. But when they refused to take possession of the Land, God made them wander in the wilderness for nearly forty years. Throughout the book, God is seen as a holy God who cannot ignore rebellion or unbelief, but also as the one who faithfully keeps his covenant and patiently provides for the needs of his people. Numbers end with a new generation preparing for the conquest of Canaan. Traditionally, Jews and Christians recognize Moses as the author, writing during the final year of his life (1406 B.C.). Numbers contains many statistics such as tribal population figures, the totals of the priests and Levites, and other numerical data. In the text, the priests were to speak blessings to the children of Israel, that the name of God may protect and provide for them.

Here, the Israelites arrive in the wilderness of Zin, where Miriam dies and is buried. Soon after, the people begin complaining to Moses and Aaron because there is no water. They accuse their leaders of bringing them into the wilderness to die.

Moses and Aaron seek God, and God tells Moses to speak to a rock so that water will come out for the people. However, in frustration with the people, Moses calls them rebels and strikes the rock twice with his staff instead of speaking to it. Water still comes out for the people, but Moses disobeys God's command.

Because Moses and Aaron did not honor God as holy before the people, God declares that they will not lead Israel into the Promised Land. Their anger caused them to miss the destination of their journey. The place is then called Meribah, meaning quarreling, because the Israelites argued with the Lord there and God demonstrated His holiness among them.

1. Unbridled Anger Will Burn What God is Building (v. 10).

- a. The Israelites were in protest because they saw no promises and they were thirsty.
 - i. As they didn't see a fertile land or fruit, they despised Moses and God (v. 5).
- b. When anger controls our actions, we can easily move outside of God's will.
 - i. **The teabag effect** is when under pressure, heat reveals what's in the bag.
 - ii. Sometimes anger ignites **wounded pride**.
 - iii. Sometimes anger ignites **unhealed pain**.
- c. Many are saved, gifted, and called, but undisciplined.
- d. Recognize your triggers and learn self-control?
 - i. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."* (Galatians 5:22–23, NKJV).

2. A Harsh Response Will Cause You to Misrepresent Christ (v. 11).

- a. Moses' emotions caused him to act differently than what God instructed.
 - i. Christians must deescalate conflict, but pride stirs chaos (Prov. 15:1).
 1. *"A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."* (Proverbs 15:1, NKJV).
- b. You can be powerful without being poisonous.
 - i. Anger is sinful when it is motivated by pride (**James 1:20**).
 1. *For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*
 - ii. There is always a backstory to furious anger.
- c. The enemy loves fiery attitudes because they destroy influence.
 - i. One angry moment can damage trust, credibility, and ministry impact.
- d. Let people see a light in you that represents Jesus.

3. Disobedience Makes You Reactive Under Pressure (v. 12-13).

- a. Moses warped the holiness of God with doubt in front of the people.
 - i. For this reason, Moses was not allowed to see the success of Israel.
 - ii. One uncontrolled moment of anger can carry lasting consequences.
 - iii. *"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."* (Romans 12:19).
- b. Be careful how you speak, especially in front of others.
 - i. *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;"* (Hebrews 12:14–15, NKJV).
- c. Too many Christians are making Christ look unreliable and unholy.
 - i. *"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth."* (Colossians 3:8, NKJV).
- d. Faithful people can be dangerous when frustration takes over.