

Part 3: When I Feel Angry

Daniel Bourassa | James 1:19-20, Ephesians 4:25-32

September 18, 2022

When one of my daughters was about 5 years old, I asked her how she thought I'd been doing with not getting angry. And she said I'd been doing pretty good. So I asked her if she thought I was *never* angry, or angry some of the time, or all the time. And she ranked me somewhere just below the middle. Her answer was kind of humbling because I thought I'd been doing really good. In fact I'd taught on anger a year earlier. And now I kind of felt like a hypocrite.

Well about six years later the temptation to get angry isn't gone. You know it's interesting that the two specific commands to fathers in the New Testament are to not provoke your children so you don't discourage them (Col. 3:21) and to not provoke them to anger (Eph. 6:4). If you have kids, then have you ever been harsh with one of them and seen them just kind of wilt? Our inappropriate anger has a way of disheartening them. And how often might a *parent's* anger be the source of provoking anger in their child?

Well today we're not looking at anger *specifically in relation* to parenting - but I bring this up because as I've prepared this message I've been very personally aware of how much easier it is to say the things I'm going to say than it is to constantly believe them and put them into practice. I don't want to be a hypocrite. I don't want to point you to grace and the hope for change and not live like it's real to me.

But by God's grace, despite all of my stumbling, I can tell you that the hope I want to share with you today is real to me. It's beautiful and true and I've seen God changing me – even though I'm not yet what I want to be.

And the main takeaway that I want us to see today is this: **“Our anger is put away by believing God's anger is satisfied in Christ.”**

Our anger is put away by believing God's anger is satisfied in Christ. We tell ourselves all kinds of excuses to justify our sinful anger. But this is the key to understanding what we need to tell ourselves when we are tempted to be angry.

And we're going to look at this in four points today:

- 1. What is Anger?**
- 2. What Our Anger Tells Us**
- 3. What Jesus' Anger Tells Us**
- 4. What We Need to Tell Ourselves**

1. What is Anger?

So first off, what is anger? Well one way to define it is that it's our “response to perceived injustice” (adapted from Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, p.15). Something happens that we feel isn't right, and our whole being responds in anger. When someone else gets the credit for your work, when you get

charged more for something than you were supposed to, when you look at the news and see cruelty and suffering - we know it shouldn't be this way.

But not *everything* we perceive as an injustice is actually an injustice. The speeding ticket *feels* unjust, but actually justice *has* been served.

So our sense of justice can be skewed. And remember this started back in the Garden (Genesis 3:1-7). When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were trying to "be like God" by choosing good and evil for themselves. They didn't trust what God said was good and evil. And immediately *their* sense of justice was skewed. They blame-shifted instead of taking responsibility. Adam even implied it was all *God's* fault (Genesis 3:11-13). And ever since, man tries to play God by doing what's right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25).

But what defines *true* justice is whether it's in *alignment* with what God says is good and evil. And we'll look at God's anger over injustice later, but for now we need to realize that most of the time the anger we feel isn't righteous anger.

In fact, some biblical counselors have observed that in order for anger to be considered righteous instead of sinful, it has to meet three criteria (see Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, p.29-30):

1. A real sin has to have occurred

First, a real sin has to have occurred.

Have you ever lectured one of your kids only to realize that you misunderstood the situation? Remember how Potiphar was angry when he threw Joseph in prison, but Joseph had been falsely accused (Genesis 39:11-20). Or we might call something sin because it personally offends us even though God's word doesn't say it's sin. Our anger can be based in a flawed perception of the situation.

2. There has to be a concern for God's glory

Secondly, there has to be concern for God's glory.

When Jesus cleansed the temple it was because he looked at the injustice in the temple court and was filled with concern for God's honor and *God's* concern for the nations (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17).

But normally its concern for *ourselves* that's at the center of *our* anger. We normally get angry because *our* glory and *our* desires are at stake.

3. We have to have a right response

And thirdly, we have to have a right response.

Our anger gives us a kind of energy that we can use to attack or defend someone. And it matters what we do with that.

In the wilderness the people of Israel quarreled with Moses because they didn't have any water (Numbers 20:2-13). They accuse Moses of bringing them out there to die. But God tells Moses to speak to a rock and that God would provide water. But Moses has had enough at this point. He makes it all about him. Instead of magnifying God's grace, he gets angry and *strikes* the rock instead.

But *righteous* anger produces a righteous response. Do we attack or defend in the service of mercy or in the service of “me”.

Did you know that the Bible doesn’t mention God getting angry until Exodus chapter 4 (Ex. 4:13-15). We see man’s anger right away in *Genesis* 4 (Gen. 4:3-7). But it takes Moses trying to get out of being God’s representative 5 times before God is ever said to be angry. And even then what does God do? He gives Moses his brother Aaron to help him.

When Jesus is angry in the book of Mark, he heals a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5). When Paul is “greatly annoyed,” he frees a girl from demonic possession (Acts 16:16-18).

So when we start to think about these three criteria – that there has to be a real sin, and concern for God’s glory, and a right response - we should realize that it’s pretty rare that we have righteous anger. When we see injustice against people, we *should* feel grief and compassion and anger. But when righteous anger becomes unrighteous anger - as one pastor put it - “it is always because I have smuggled myself onto the throne. And instead of *representing* God, I have replaced him.” (Christopher Ash and Steve Midgley, *The Heart of Anger*, p.67)

Spectrum

Now anger takes many forms. In the Bible, anger is associated with quarreling, jealousy, hostility, slander, wrath, malice, obscene talk, and bitterness (2 Cor. 12:20; Col. 3:8; Eph 4:31). Maybe you’ve never considered how anger relates to resentment, or being irritable, or sarcasm, being critical, or competitiveness. What do you identify with on that spectrum? And maybe you don’t see any of this in yourself. But what would your spouse say? Or a close friend? Maybe you should trust their opinion.

On one end of the spectrum is attacking someone (which is what we usually think of) but the other end is withdrawing from them. Think of the different stories in the Bible that describe anger as withdrawal. When Cain is angry, it says his face fell (Genesis 4:5). Or what about King Ahab when he wants a vineyard but the owner won’t sell it to him (1 Kings 21:1-4)? Ahab went home “vexed and sullen”. It says, “He lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.” Ahab sounds kind of depressed. But what’s underneath his response is actually anger.

How do the people around you experience *your* disappointment? Do *you* withdraw in anger?

Now both of those stories end in murder. But things don’t have to escalate to murder in order for God to equate it with murder. Let’s read Jesus’ words in **Matthew 5:21-22**.

Jesus shows us that our anger breaks one of the Ten Commandments. We might think our anger just flares up out of nowhere -that we can’t help it. But Jesus says that we are held accountable for how we feel and how we talk.

So whether we tend more towards attack or withdrawal, Jesus says we’re guilty of murder. The attacking anger says, “I wish you were dead” while the silent treatment says “I’m going to treat you as if you were already dead.” (see Rick Thomas, *Mad*, p.7)

So we can say we’re just frustrated or a little irritable. But whatever word we use, Jesus calls it murder.

And this is the anger that we're going to focus on today – the full spectrum of sinful anger that we experience over perceived injustices against us.

Now I have to make a little disclaimer here because we're not going to be able to fully unpack anger as it relates to abuse today. With abuse, the husband desires to have complete power and control over his wife. And he uses several tactics *including* anger to suppress her. And so abuse is not *primarily* an anger problem. I want to read this quote to help you understand what's distinct about abuse:

***"We might think, first, of a husband who silences his wife with intimidatory abuse. No physical violence takes place, but there is plenty of threat. And ever so slowly, the barrage of demeaning comments and the constant rubbishing of every endeavor does its murderous work. It erodes every shred of self-worth, undermines any sense of value, until, finally, the husband realizes his terrible goal, and his power is made absolute. He has a wife who no longer questions his desires or defies his will. He has made her his subject, and his terrible tyranny is complete."* (Christopher Ash and Steve Midgley, *The Heart of Anger*, p.42)**

If you're a wife hearing this and you feel like you might identify with something I just read, then know that Jesus says his church is meant to help you (Matthew 18:16-17). Please reach out to me or one of the elders or a fellow member. And if you're a husband and you know that there's something not right in how you're treating your wife, please come and talk to us. There is hope and grace for anyone that turns to Jesus.

And so next we're going to look at our second point: **What Our Anger Tells Us** about ourselves.

2. What Our Anger Tells Us

So what needs to change? Well there's some practical things that can help us change habits and avoid temptation. You'll probably give in to anger less if you exercise, get enough sleep, and plan ahead. But the change that Jesus most wants for us goes much deeper.

This series is about talking to yourself. But first we're going to consider the things we *already* tell ourselves and how that exposes some of our underlying beliefs.

Beliefs

Imagine your child wants juice, but you tell them "no." But later you hear a conflict and come into the living room to find your child holding their cup with forbidden juice spilled all over their shirt and the rug. And they are all upset at another kid for bumping into them. Now if you ask your child "Why is there juice all over the place?" what are they going to say? "Because he bumped me!" But what's the correct answer? The correct answer is, "because I put juice in the cup."

Anger spills out of *us* because anger is already *inside* of us.

Let's read **Mark 7:20-23**.

When someone "bumps into you" – it may provide the *opportunity* for you to sin, but it's not the *cause* of your sin. How often does someone try to excuse their anger by saying "that wasn't the real me". But Jesus says the opposite – that *is* the real you. All it takes is the right amount of pressure and what's inside comes out.

I didn't think I had a problem with anger until I had kids. But parenting put just the right amount of pressure on *me* to bring out what's in *my* heart.

So we have to go deeper than behavior change – we need heart change. We don't just want to address the fruit - we want to address the root.

Let's read **James 1:19-20**.

What is James telling us to be slow to speak and get angry about? Well chapter one is all about going through trials. And when you meet a trial, James says we need to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. So the words we hear and the words we speak have a bearing on how we act. Not listening combined with hasty speech results in being sinfully reactionary.

Now being a good listener is a great principle, but why is James telling us to be quick to hear? Well in the surrounding verses the words that James wants us to hear are all *God's* words. There's the word of truth in v.18, the implanted word in v.21, and then we're supposed to be doers of the word in v.22-25. So this isn't just better communication advice. We need to be quick to listen to *God's* Word if we are to *understand* our trials rightly. We need *wisdom* from God's word (v.5) if we are to *face* our trials rightly.

So to *not* be quick to listen is to be quick to make our own assessment – our own diagnosis of what's happening *apart* from God's word. And when we interpret our trials apart from his word, the result is the anger of man that does not produce the righteousness of God. The words that instantly start spewing from our mouths reveal instead the lies we believe and the things we really value.

So what is it that we believe in our hearts that makes us angry in our trials? We're going to look at four underlying beliefs.

1. I Deserve What I Desire - self-righteousness

First, we believe that **I deserve what I desire**.

Let's read **James 1:14-15**.

Our own desire for something is what lures and entices us into temptation.

Also, let's read **James 4:1-2**.

A question we often ask in our house is "what were you wanting so badly that you were willing to sin to get it?" Our anger reveals what we desire – what we value.

We desire bad things, or we desire good things but have given those things an improper place in our hearts. If we value recognition more than we should, we'll get angry. Or if we value financial stability more than we should, we'll get angry. If we value peace and quiet, kids that stay in bed, or uninterrupted time with our spouse more than we should, we'll get angry.

And we move pretty quickly from "I want it" to "I deserve it". We start demanding what we want.

It's self-righteousness that causes us to believe that we've earned something. And when we don't get what we think we deserve we get angry.

And we see this all over the place in the Bible. In the very first story after the Fall, Cain believed he deserved to have his sacrifice accepted by God (Genesis 4:3-5). Naaman believed he was worthy to have a prophet heal him (2 Kings 5:9-12). The prodigal son's older brother believed he had earned greater favor from their father (Luke 15:28-30).

When we believe we are deserving, grace is an insult to us. Whether someone else gets grace or our own merit is rejected making us *dependent* on grace – either way we are actually angry at grace.

When we say things like “This shouldn’t be happening to me!” or “I deserve better!” - what we’re really saying is “I shouldn’t need grace!”

James said “You do not have because you do not ask.” Think about that. All of our energy being spent in quarrels and fights and war and murder - and James says “you didn’t ask.” Prayer – not just treating God like customer service – but dependent, earnest drawing near to God requires me to humble myself and admit that I need grace (James 4:6-10).

2. If I Don't Protect It, I Will Lose It – fear/control

So we crave something, and we tell ourselves that we should have it, but then it's threatened. So we tell ourselves: **“If I don't protect it, I will lose it.”**

Our anger is often rooted in fear. We're afraid of losing what we desire. Either something is preventing us from getting it, or we already have it and now it's being taken away.

When someone rear-ends your new car – when your boyfriend suddenly stops responding to your texts – when you discover that you didn't actually hang up the phone before you started being sarcastic – we get angry when we're afraid we're losing something.

It's interesting how an angry man seems so powerful and intimidating on the outside that we wouldn't think of him as being insecure. But an angry man is a fearful man. He's actually a very weak man who's afraid of losing control of what he wants.

You know we think of anger as a response that comes out of nowhere – it just happens. But have you ever been in an argument and then someone knocks on your door? How do you answer the door? Somehow that knock has the power to instantly give you self-control. That's because the desire to protect your reputation is strong enough for you to control your anger. And do you see what's sad about that? That means that the opinion of a stranger is worth more to you than the experience of your spouse or your child or your friend.

You see what looks like *losing* control is often our attempt to *take* control. Remember that anger supplies us with energy to attack or defend. But because we've replaced God with ourselves on the throne, now that energy to help the oppressed gets repurposed for our own selfish ends. And so our anger can be really manipulative – getting the other person to feel afraid can alleviate our *own* fears.

And again this is where there is a distinction with abuse and its relation to anger. Anger is just another tactic that an abusive husband uses alongside ridicule, or blame-shifting, or mind games, or controlling finances. And these tactics all help him to maintain power and control over his wife. So when you start to see these patterns of using these various tactics, you're actually seeing abuse.

Anger is just usually the easiest thing to notice. And it's likely the tactic that will grab the attention of the wife or someone around her to expose the abuse that's already taking place.

3. If They Violate My Desire, They Need to Pay – revenge

Next, thirdly, we tell ourselves: “**If they violate my desire, they need to pay**”. When our control is frustrated, we often respond by taking revenge. When the college student snubs the messy roommate or the dad disciplines his child in anger – something challenged our deity and we're all trying to make it right through sin. We perceive injustice and try to deal-out just retribution. But the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

We might be able to get the other person to clean up their stuff or quit nagging us. But the peace we just managed to take for ourselves is a fraud. Our anger is powerless to produce righteousness in *us*, and it's powerless to produce righteousness in the other person.

And these three things that we tell ourselves (I deserve what I desire, If I don't protect it, I will lose it, and If they violate it, they need to pay) – these three things ultimately reveal something we believe about God.

4. Because I'm On My Own – unbelief/own savior

You see underneath these lies I believe **I'm on my own**. I'm the only one looking out for me. This is thinking like an orphan instead of thinking like an adopted child. It's ultimately a wrong view of myself flowing from unbelief in God that causes me to think this way. I'm essentially saying:

- I don't believe God satisfies my deepest desires – I *need* something else in order to have life
- I don't believe God gives me what I deserve – he's holding out on me
- I don't believe God is in control or if he is then he isn't for my good – it's up to me to save myself
- I don't believe God is just – if I don't make them pay, they're going to get away with it
- I don't believe God is with me – I'm on my own and it's all up to me

So who are we ultimately angry at? When the item at the store is out of stock – who's ultimately behind that? When your laptop crashes before you saved your work – who ordained that? I'm using intentionally trivial things because there's no unspiritual realm of your life that God doesn't care about or isn't sovereign over.

At the end of the story of Joseph his brothers came to him afraid that Joseph would take revenge on them for selling him into slavery. Joseph responds this way in **Genesis 50:19-20**:

Joseph was freed from being angry and taking revenge because he believed he wasn't alone in all of this. If we believe what God says about himself – then instead of trying to take his place, we can cry out to him in our distress – we can lament what is confusing and painful – and yet we can still cling to him and trust him.

So stop hating a sovereign God. If God isn't who he says he is then there *is* much to fear - you are the only one who can save you, and anger may well be the tool of your salvation. But if you believe in this

sovereign one who has saved you and adopted you and keeps you, then stop living as if there is no God.

So we see how the things we tell ourselves reveal unbelief and what we really value in our hearts. But before we move on, I want us to consider the impact our anger has on our relationship with God and relationships in the church.

Relationships

Let's look at **Ephesians 4:25-32**.

There's a lot here that relates to anger. But for now I want to focus in on verse 30: "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

You know my relationship with my kids is where I'm most aware of the effects of my anger. The thought of being a hypocrite and hindering them from knowing their Heavenly Father – that's what most concerns me.

But the relationship that is most affected by our sinful anger is actually our relationship with *God*. We have been given God's personal Spirit dwelling inside of us. And our sin personally grieves him. So what is it about our sin - and particularly our anger - that causes the Spirit to feel grieved?

Well in the book of Ephesians there's a strong emphasis on unity within the church. Verse 25 said that we are members one of another. We are united together in Christ, under Christ. And in Ephesians 2 we see the Spirit is the one giving all adopted children *together* access to the Father (2:18). The Spirit is the one building us up *together* into a dwelling place for God (2:22). In chapter 3 the Spirit is the one strengthening us *together* to know the love of Christ (3:16-19). And at the beginning of chapter 4 Paul charges us to be eager to maintain this unity of the Spirit (4:3). Union with Christ means unity under Christ within his church.

And so what is it about bitterness and wrath and anger that grieves the Holy Spirit? We are fighting against the very love and unity in the church that the Spirit is here to produce. We are opposing the Holy Spirit in us and trying to tear down the body of Christ that *he* is seeking to build up.

Let's just think about bitterness specifically for a moment. Bitterness is basically a cherished anger - an anger you nurse and aren't willing to let go of. Anger that we don't deal with is the one thing the Bible says gives the devil a foothold. It's giving him a beachhead to invade from.

Have you ever fantasized about a past confrontation with someone and replayed the conflict in your head? Did you imagine having just the right words to put them in their place? These thoughts play right into Satan's hand.

A hard heart gives opportunity to the devil, tears others down, and causes disunity. And this is in contrast with the tender heart that extends grace and joins the Spirit's work of building up the church.

1 Corinthians 13 is the famous love chapter in the Bible. And in context, once again, Paul is promoting unity in the church. Let's read **1 Cor. 13:4-7**.

When we are irritable or resentful we are walking contrary to love. Our sinful anger is the opposite of love. It reveals a lack of patience, a lack of kindness, a lack of humility, a lack of forgiveness.

And so we grieve the Spirit through our opposition to his love and all because we are not responding to grace. Remember the logic of **Eph. 4:32**.

It's the forgiveness of God in Christ that enables our gracious attitude towards others. Only in seeing that we've been forgiven will we "love much" in response (Luke 7:47).

And so with this window into what our anger tells us about ourselves and our relationships, now we want to look at **What Jesus' Anger Tells Us** about God.

3. What Jesus' Anger Tells Us

Now God's anger is talked about in the Bible more than any other anger. But his anger is actually rooted in a different aspect of his character – and that's love.

God *responds* to injustice with anger, but God *is* love. In eternity past there was no injustice to provoke anger in God. But he has always existed in love between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (John 17:24).

And because God is love even his anger is a loving anger. His anger is actually an expression of his justice and love.

If we share in his love then we will also care when people made in his image are mistreated and taken advantage of. You can't be truly good in a fallen world and not get angry. Now today we're not addressing how we should seek justice or advocate for the oppressed – but I want us to see that God's anger at injustice should be a comfort to us when we see injustice.

Now maybe some of the things you've experienced make it really hard for you to find comfort in a justice that we don't get to see yet. You are a victim of Adam's sin and other people's sin. You may not have words to describe the wounds you feel. But in order to deal with our pain we need to think *more* of God's anger not less. It's God's anger at injustice and his promise to make everything right in the end that enables us to let go. Being stuck wishing things had gone differently or fantasizing about vindicating ourselves will not change the past and it won't help us follow Christ.

Let's read **Romans 12:19-20**.

The assurance of God's justice frees us up to overcome evil with good. Jesus knows what you're going through. He's gone before you in this. Look at **1 Peter 2:23**.

God will vindicate you. And those who have sinned against you will either suffer his wrath or Jesus already suffered his wrath in their place. Do you take comfort in knowing justice will be done? Do you long that even more than a display of God's justice in the *destruction* of the wicked that his justice might be magnified in a sinner being *ransomed* by Christ? Jesus prayed on the cross "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Are you inclined to that same attitude towards those who have hurt you?

So we need to think more about God's anger as sufferers. But we also need to think more about God's anger as sinners.

To do that let's take a look at three scenes of Jesus' anger in the New Testament and see what they teach us.

We looked at how our anger grieves the Holy Spirit. But there's another place that talks about *Jesus* being grieved.

Let's read **Mark 3:1-5**.

Here we see Jesus' anger but it's connected with him being grieved. Our selfish anger grieves *God*, but in this passage *Jesus himself* feels anger *as* he is grieved by hardness of heart. The Pharisees want God's Messiah dead, they are oppressing the people, and they feel no compassion for the man with the withered hand. And what does Jesus' anger do? He boldly shows compassion and heals the man.

The second instance of Jesus' anger is when he cleansed the temple. Let's read **Matthew 21:12-14**.

Jesus purifies the temple of the greedy commerce taking place. But his motivation is restoration. Did you see how clearing the temple court restores the temple as a house of prayer for all peoples (cf. Mark 11:17)? And it cleared the way for him to minister to the blind and lame who came to him and were healed.

Lastly, we see Jesus' anger at Lazarus' tomb. Let's read from **John 11:33-35, 38, 43**.

The words translated "deeply moved" actually suggest anger or outrage. The same sin and death that cause him to feel anger are the same sin and death that cause him to grieve and then break the power of death by calling, "Lazarus come out."

In these stories, Jesus reveals God's anger, but he doesn't reveal it as we might expect. We see the danger of hardening our hearts - of hypocrisy and oppression - and the reality of death. But in every case we also see his compassion and restoration for anyone who comes to him.

And a just but loving God's grace is made possible because Jesus suffered the righteous anger of God in our place. Let's read **Isaiah 12:1**.

God can turn his anger away from us because he turned it on himself in his Son. Jesus paid the price so that you might experience that comfort in him.

Sinful anger is in *opposition* to love, but righteous anger was satisfied *through* love (1 John 4:10). Jesus is God's love made visible (1 John 4:9).

Jesus is patient and kind. Jesus does not envy or boast. He is not arrogant or rude. He does not insist on his own way; he is not irritable or resentful. He does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This is who bore the anger that *your* anger deserved.

Our anger is put away by believing God's anger is satisfied in Christ. If you have never received this gift, you must come to Jesus.

And there is one final mention of Jesus' anger. Revelation speaks of the eternal wrath of the Lamb towards the unrepentant (14:10, cf. 6:16). And this is terrifying. The whole imagery of Jesus as a Lamb is because he is "the Lamb who was slain" (5:12, 13:8) so that you wouldn't experience God's wrath. But one day the opportunity to turn will be over, and you will come under the wrath of the very one who sacrificed himself to save you. The time to turn is now. Will you not cast yourself on his mercy?

"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Ps. 2:12)

So we've examined what our anger tells us about ourselves and what Jesus' anger tells us about God. And now we're going to look at **What We Need to Tell Ourselves** about our anger.

4. What We Need to Tell Ourselves

So what should you do when you're tempted to get angry? Well here are five truths that you might tell yourself in the moment. (partially adapted from Jim Newheiser https://www.jimnewheiser.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Anger_v2.pdf)

1) This is all about me and my Father

When we meet trials we have a hair-trigger for angry responses. We may only have a split-second to interrupt the cycle. But remember our trials are here to test and refine our relationship with our heavenly Father. They make us depend on him and grow our trust in him. So when a trial comes I want to remember that this is all about me and my Father.

2) I am not God

When one of my kids defiantly does the same thing over and over again – I can feel that temperature rising inside of me because of that slight to my authority. I'm tempted to use anger to force their obedience. But I have to remember that God is the one who deserves *my* obedience, and yet this isn't how my Father treats me.

3) What God ordains is for my good

Even the smallest inconvenience is under his sovereign control. Not getting what I want right now is a part of his fatherly care for me. When you desire possessions, remember that the Lord is your portion – you have a beautiful inheritance (Psalm 16:5-6). When you desire intimacy, remember the marriage day of the Lamb is very near (Revelation 19:6-9). When you want to protect your reputation, remember what the Bible says about you is far worse than what anyone else can say about you (Romans 3:10-18) and yet your identity is redeemed, adopted, beloved.

4) God has been gracious to me

To help you respond to this grace, I would suggest you remember two logs: a log to keep and a log to get rid of.

First, it might be useful to keep a log of when you get angry. You can write down when it happened and what you wanted. Maybe you can share it with another believer for accountability and prayer.

As you identify the desires you try to satisfy through sin, you could find verses that remind you of the better promises of God through grace.

And the second log is a log to get rid of. And that's the log that Jesus says to remove from your eye so you don't judge your brother (Matthew 7:1-5). When someone "bumps us" and we respond sinfully to them, we need to go and confess that to them (Matthew 5:23-24).

There probably *is* a speck in the other person's eye. But Jesus tells you to focus on *your* need for change more than on their need for change. We're the ones with the log because we've forgotten that we have a far greater debt between us and God, and he has forgiven us through Christ. How can we be like the unmerciful servant who forgot the incalculable debt he was forgiven and then went and grabbed his fellow servant saying, "pay what you owe!" (Matthew 18:23-35) Don't be one sinner choking another sinner over a smaller debt. No matter how significant someone else's offense is, we have to believe we've been forgiven infinitely more. There's a quote that goes: "I am a much bigger offender than I could ever be a victim." (Christopher Ash and Steve Midgley, *The Heart of Anger*, p.159) God has been gracious to me, so I must be gracious towards others.

And he gives us grace for our sins, but he also gives us the grace to change. And that leads us to our final truth:

5) **I am a new creation**

If you have called on the name of the Lord, then you *have been* born again (Romans 10:13; 1 Peter 1:23) – you *are* a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). His grace gives you freedom from the *guilt* of sin but also from the *power* of sin (Romans 6). We were made new. God put his own Holy Spirit inside of us. And now in the place of sinful anger his Spirit enables us to produce the fruit of love and patience and gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

And so you have the ability and the necessity of putting away what belongs to your former manner of life (Ephesians 4:22). You're already born again. You're already created after the likeness of God (4:24). So stop living like a dead man. Start living as the new creation you are.

In the Ephesians passage we looked at earlier Paul gave us a lot of things to actively do: put away, speak, do not sin, share, do not grieve, be kind, forgive. We put off and put on. We saw that repentance doesn't just look like a thief not stealing anymore or even a thief starting to work. Instead it looks like him becoming known as a person who loves to share what he's earned with others.

So if we're to do this with our anger, it takes effort. But we also *let* the Spirit do his work. **Let's read Ephesians 4:30-31** again.

Who puts away all bitterness and wrath and anger? The Spirit that sealed us, the very Spirit that our anger grieves, is the Spirit that puts our anger away. We are not alone in this.

Our anger is *put away* by believing God's anger is satisfied in Christ.

It's ultimately the glory of Christ in the unity of his church that's at stake. Will you resist the Spirit's work or will you join him in putting away your anger for the sake of his church?

Wherever you fail, remember the grace of your Father. And wherever by the Spirit you don't give into sinful anger or you respond with gracious words – celebrate that. Praise God for his Spirit being with you and helping you. Praise him for the gift of getting to participate in building up the body so that Christ might be magnified in all the earth.