

Anger in the Home – James 1:19-20

The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage VI

Introduction – *"It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand"* – Mark Twain. The simple statements in these verses are not hard to understand. They are hard to believe and they are hard to obey. They are particularly hard to apply in our marriage relationships and in family life, for it is here that the temptation towards anger and wrath can be great. Anger is tricky because it is often masked by the one who is angry as a righteous response to a perceived evil. Sometimes it is excused as a means to convict and reform the evildoer; other times it is seen as a means of punishing the offender. We must come to understand that "man's anger" is a sin, that it is ineffective in producing righteous change, and that it is a leading marriage-killer.

"But God Gets Angry..." – *"God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day"* (Psalm 7:11). *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"* (Rom 1:17). *"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way"* (Psalm 2:12). *"Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth"* (Rev 16:1). God's anger is, by definition, entirely just, and directed at those who have acted in unrighteousness.

Man's Righteous Anger? – *"Be angry and do not sin, Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still"* (Psalm 4:4). *"Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil"* (Eph 4:26f). If our anger is righteous it is because God's laws are being dishonored. A test of our anger's righteousness is whether or not we dishonor these laws. 99 out of a 100 times, anger in the home is nothing close to righteous. Anger in the home occurs because you have been put out (not God), because you have been hurt (not God), because you have been offended (not God), or because you have been dishonored (not God). This is easily proven by how much lack of anger you have over the offense someone else has received. This is why Paul so quickly also says, *"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice"* (Eph 4:31).

What is the Real Reason for our Anger? – Anger is sly, so look at what made others angry to learn what really is going on when you get angry. Cain murders Abel, performing the first and classic side-long glance (Gen 4:4-7), and James warns us that this idolatrous coveting is what brings forth wrath (James 4:1-2). Jonah gets in a huff with God for being merciful to the Assyrians when Jonah wants them to get the justice due them (Jonah 4:1-4). The prodigal son's brother is the same way, angry with the father for forgiving his brother (Luke 15:28-30). Esau hated Jacob for taking the God-promised blessing from Isaac (Gen 27:41). Balaam cursed and beat his donkey because he thought the donkey was making a fool of him (Num 22:27-29). Saul was furious with Jonathan for being more devoted to David (and God) than to him (1 Sam 20:30). Herod's anger burned over the news of the birth of a new King, and so he slaughtered many innocent baby boys (Matt 2:16).

Christ's birth occasioned Herod's anger, but was not the cause of it. The cause was his heart demands to cling to his own kingship at whatever the cost. Ultimately, anger is not something which comes from external situations; it comes from within your own heart (Mark 7:20-23). Jonah and the prodigal's brother might have told you that they had a righteous anger and that all they wanted was to see justice. And this is where you begin to see how twisted and tricky this sin really is.

Vengeance is God's not Your's (or – You Don't Have a Right to be Angry) (Rom 12:17-21) – You are not allowed to take vengeance into your own hand, and you are not allowed to stuff your anger. You must hand your anger over to the Lord and trust His perfect, sovereign care and timing. The fact of the matter is that, in your anger, you have far less mercy towards the little sins committed against you than the Lord has towards the infinites sins you have committed against Him (Matt 18:21-35). You don't want to be that servant in the story. You have no right to wrath on your own. Besides, God did not appoint you to be a vessel for His wrath (1 Thess 5:9). We have gospel to speak, and gospel is kind, longsuffering, and efficacious (Rom 2:3-4).

Getting Rid of Anger – Anger is not in your home because of what your spouse did. Anger is in your home because of what is in your heart. James 4:6-10 tells us what to do: Humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. If you have been angry, humble yourself before God and before everyone who witnessed any outbursts, any malice, any evil speech, and any bitterness. When your flesh screams at you that your anger is just, remember what true justice would look like in the world and what it would look like if God were just and fair with you. Confess the anger and bitterness as sin, receive the Father's full and complete forgiveness, and enter into the party of joy, forgiveness and fellowship. In that mindset, you will have removed the log from your own eye and you will be qualified to efficaciously lend a hand to a sinning spouse to remove the speck from his or hers.

Finally – Here are some good Proverbs for all who struggle with anger – memorize and meditate on these – Prov 10:11-13, 12:18, 14:16-17, 29-30, 15:1, 18, 16:7, 18, 32, 22:24-25, 29:9, 11, 20, 22.