

When God Is Provoked to Anger

2 Kings 1:1-8; Psalm 7:11

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“Be ye angry, and sin not” is a command from the Lord found in Ephesians 4:26. A Christian who is angry and yet does not sin is a Christian who hates what God hates and loves what God loves. The holy anger of a Christian is a disapproval and disgust with sin and rebellion against the Lord and His commandments (beginning with the sin and rebellion in this Christian). A holy anger is not a proud or vindictive anger. It is not an anger that is out of control. It is under the control of the Holy Spirit.

You see, dear ones, a Christian cannot be neutral about sin and its temptation. Apathy toward sin is itself a sin, for the Lord is not indifferent and apathetic to sin. He hates and loathes sin. And though we who are redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ are forever loved and forgiven by our gracious and merciful Father, let us not for one moment think that God, therefore, loves our transgression of His holy commandments, condones, or excuses it. He doesn't excuse it, but He does mercifully forgive your sin through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

God loved you, His chosen ones in Christ Jesus, so much and yet hated your sin so much that in love and in righteousness He sent the Lord Jesus to bear the just punishment of hell which you who trust in Him deserved. And never forget that the end and goal of God's election of His people is your holiness (i.e. to be like the God who created them and saved them—Ephesians 1:4). It is not pursuing your own pleasure that makes you happy. It is not even others that make you happy. It is holiness that brings happiness regardless of the trials you face. Why is heaven filled with the greatest degree of joy ever known? It is because all sin and rebellion will be forever removed, and only holiness will reign there. Dear ones, if you do not care to be holiness now, why would you think you would ever enjoy a heaven where only holiness exists forever and ever?

In our text this Lord's Day, we shall see how wicked King Ahaziah of Israel provoked God to anger by his unrepentant sin and rebellion against the holy commandments of the Lord. Yes, God was angry with a holy anger (Psalm 7:11). The main points from our text are the following: (1) When God Is Provoked to Anger, the Enemy Gains Territory (2 Kings 1:1); (2) When God Is Provoked to Anger, Health and Life Are Taken Away (2 Kings 1:2a); (3) When God Is Provoked to Anger, Deception Blinds One to the Truth (2 Kings 1:2b-8).

I. When God Is Provoked to Anger, the Enemy Gains Territory (2 Kings 1:1).

A. As the last few verses of 1 Kings 22 end, we are given a brief summary of Ahab's son, Ahaziah, who assumed rule over Israel after the violent judgment brought by the Lord upon Ahab. Note particularly what is said in 1 Kings 22:52. Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of Asa his father in doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kings 22:43); whereas Ahaziah followed the wicked example of his father and mother. And the primary way in which he walked in the way of his wicked parents was in the idolatry they practiced (1 Kings 22:53). From idolatry flow the violations of all other commandments of the Lord. If the greater of God's commandments is ignored, neglected, and despised, so will all of the rest. And note that it was especially in regard to his idolatry that Ahaziah “provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done” (1 Kings 22:53). God's anger is revealed in what befell Ahaziah in 2 Kings 1:1ff—they were a warning of that eternal judgment that awaited him after death in the Lake of Fire. Ahaziah was certainly old enough to have known or even witnessed the glory and power of the one, true, living God there on Mt. Carmel through Elijah the prophet. His sin was not that of ignorance, but of defiance (which always aggravates sin). Yet he preferred the religion that appealed to his pleasure over that which was right and went against the lusts of his flesh.

1. You cannot provoke God to anger by your unrepentant sin and rebellion against Him and yet escape God's judgment. The only way to escape God's judgment and condemnation is by Jesus bearing the judgment you deserve (John 5:24). Either you will bear God's righteous judgement now and for all eternity, or Jesus has borne God's righteous judgment for you now and for all eternity.

2. Think not that because you are not bowing down and worshipping an image of Baal (as was Ahaziah) that there is no idolatry in your life. For idolatry is basically worshipping the creature rather than the Creator—trusting, loving, and honoring yourself more than the Lord Jesus Christ—serving the gifts you receive from the Lord rather than serving the Lord who has given them to you. As Calvin has stated:

For what is idolatry if not this: to worship the gifts in place of the giver himself? (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.36).

Is this not why Paul calls covetousness idolatry (Colossians 3:5-7)? How do you know if you are coveting and worshipping the creature? If you cannot be content in Christ without it, then that person or that thing has become more important to you and more to be desired by you than your Savior. True worship is not that which pleases you or me, but that which God pleases God and is offered to the Lord in spirit and truth (as He commands).

3. Yes, Ahaziah's unrepentant idolatry provoked God to anger, but, dear ones, realize your heart and mine manufacture idols to a greater degree than any temple of a false god. Be not deceived.

B. Because God was provoked to anger by Ahaziah's unrepentant idolatry, the enemy that had been conquered (at the time of David), namely, Moab, rebelled against Israel. Moab had been under the rule of Israel, but Moab shook off the dominion of Israel and became once again an active enemy against Israel because God was provoked to anger against Israel (Proverbs 21:1). Moab became a thorn in the flesh of Israel.

1. Remember, when God is provoked to anger by unrepentant sin and rebellion (in your life, home, church, or nation), that He often lifts the restraint against the enemy, so that the adversary gains ground in those areas of your life that were once under control (pride, lust, anger, bitterness, unbelief, fear, etc.). You will either be controlled by the Holy Spirit or by the enemy (within or without). Know who the enemy, the sin, and the temptation are. You will be controlled by the enemy if you do not know or do not act as though you know who the enemy is. Only when you know who the enemy is and take the enemy seriously will you call upon the Lord to fight this battle in the might and power of the Lord. If you give the enemy an inch of control, the enemy will take a mile of control. The battle begins in the heart and mind in setting holy boundaries for the eyes, ears, lips, hands, and feet. To take back that part of your life that the enemy has overrun, begin by falling upon the mercy of God, acknowledging your sin, communing with Christ, and fleeing temptations and sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Don't play games with that which can destroy you.

2. God is longsuffering even with the wicked—Moab did not rebel during the reign of Ahab. But put not the Lord to the test by continuing in unrepentant sin just because the enemy has not totally invaded your life, family, job, church, or nation. God's longsuffering should lead you to repentance not to excusing your sin (Romans 2:4).

II. When God Is Provoked to Anger, Health and Life Are Taken Away (2 Kings 1:2a).

A. The Lord will often remove our own resources (like our health, income, job, income, safety) in which we trust when he is provoked to anger for unrepentant sin and rebellion against Him and His holy commandments. This was the case with Ahaziah: he fell through the lattice of his upper room (likely, the protective railing around the roof of his palace), and sustained a severe injury which would lead to his death.

B. Ahaziah once again did not connect his provocation against the Lord with Moab or his fall. His

heart was so blinded by his sin and rebellion against the Lord that he blocked out any possibility that the one true living God could have anything to do with these providential events in his life. See hand of the Lord in your life in both blessings and trials. “What is the Lord teaching me?”

1. Dear ones, certainly not all loss of health, income, or family is the result of unrepentant sin and rebellion in your life (that wasn't the case with Job, Joseph, or the saints in Hebrews 11:36-38).
 - a. God uses your suffering for Christ's truth and righteousness to reveal that you are united to Christ and to prepare you for reigning with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).
 - b. God uses your suffering to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
 - c. God uses your suffering to prevent pride (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 - d. God uses your suffering as a testimony of His sufficiency to you and others (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).
 - e. God uses your trials to glorify Himself (John 9:1-3).
2. Dear ones, there are times that loss of health, income, or family may also be the result of unrepentant sin or rebellion in your life.
 - a. God chastens those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:6). He is a good Father, and will not leave you in your unrepentant sin, but will bring afflictions, trials, and loss in order to show His love to you, that you might be partakers of His holiness (Psalm 119:71). The bed of affliction is a good teacher in the hand of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:30).
 - b. God also judges the wicked who continue in their willful paths of sin and rebellion against the Lord and against the light He has given to them, just as He did here with Ahaziah. This was a sign and warning of much worse judgment to come
3. Times of loss in your life are times for prayerful reflection upon what the Lord would show you and teach you through that loss (Psalm 139:23-24). A word of caution: let us be careful that we not presume some divine omniscience as to why a brother or sister has suffered loss, lest we face the same (remember Job's "friends").

III. When God is Provoked to Anger, Deception Blinds One to the Truth (2 Kings 1:2b-8).

A. Ahaziah fears that this fall and the accompanying illness will lead to his death. But his sin and rebellion against the Lord, his unbelief in the word and prophecy of Elijah and the other prophets of God has led him into such a dark deception that he seeks not the Lord God of Israel, but rather seeks to know whether he will live or die from the false god, Baal-zebub (the lord of flies). Perhaps this false god was so named because it was claimed that it had delivered Ekron from a plague of flies. This name came to be associated with the prince of the demons, Satan (Matthew 12:24). But the angel of the Lord (the Lord Jesus) sends Elijah to intercept the messengers of Ahaziah and rebukes Ahaziah, giving him the answer that he sought not from the Lord God (2 Kings 1:3-4).

B. As the messengers return to Ahaziah, they relate what was told them (2 Kings 1:5-6). Ahaziah was not interested in the message, but only in the messenger, and knows that it was Elijah (2 Kings 1:7-8). Ahaziah would not receive the truth because he did not like it, and blamed it upon Elijah (just like his father, Ahab, would not receive the truth from Micaiah because he did not like it).

1. Many are turning to the occult, to Ouija boards, tarot cards, horoscopes, séances, paganism, and Satanism for a word from beyond (Isaiah 8:19-20). People want a supernatural word (like many within Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches). But the Lord God has given His supernatural Word to you in Holy Scripture—it is inspired, absolutely pure, and infallible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Like Ahaziah the world is deceived and walks in spiritual blindness (like Bar-Jesus whom Paul smote with blindness in Acts 13). Until the lost are granted sight to see the truth of the gospel by the Holy Spirit, they will walk in darkness (just as we all did before the Lord gave us sight).

2. To the degree that you as a Christian walk in the light of Christ's gospel, doctrine, commandments, prayer and fellowship, to that degree you shall be granted by the Lord greater light and understanding (Psalm 36:9). Why should the Lord Jesus grant you more light if you are not loving and growing in the light He has already given to you? Dear ones, it is not merely in desiring to know God's will or God's truth that you shall see more light, but in doing what you presently know to be the will of God in Scripture. I doubt you would reward your child with greater privileges if he/she said to you, "I wanted to do what was right, I just didn't do it." So likewise, the Lord grants more light as you walk in the light He has already given to you.

3. Ahaziah evidenced his unbelief by his unwillingness to seek out in prayer the will of God and moreover by his rebellion in not following the will of God once it was revealed to Him. He revealed himself to be the enemy of the Lord because he fought against the will of God. Are you fighting against God's will or are you submitting to it? Are you walking in the light or in darkness? Walking in darkness is death. Walking in the light is life. Fall upon the mercy of the Lord Jesus who is the light of the world and who alone can set you free from the darkness and hopelessness of sin, idolatry, and serving yourself. Amen.

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