

“Moses’ Anger”
Exodus 32:19-24
(Preached at Trinity, April 26, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at what’s been called the golden calf episode. Moses had been upon Mount Sinai many days communing with God receiving the directions for the Tabernacle. He was receiving God’s pledge to be with His people. Meanwhile, while Moses was hearing of God’s gracious plans for His people Israel began to be impatient. They forgot God’s commands. They forgot their pledges of absolute obedience. They fell into gross idolatry.
2. They began to confront Aaron with their demands for other gods and Aaron fashioned for them a golden calf – an idol in the form of a young bull. Israel was trying to combine the idolatry of Egypt with the worship of God.
3. Their actions immediately kindled the wrath of God and in His anger He was about to consume them. Moses immediately began to intercede on their behalf. Upon Moses’ intercession God turned away His wrath.
4. As we’ve seen. This was not an arbitrary decision as if God changes as men change but according to God’s eternal plan and purpose. Although God has ordained all things He works in the lives of His people in time and history. He acts today, hears prayer today. Our prayers are effectual today. God has ordained our prayers. He told Moses, “Go down Moses.” He had determined Moses to be their mediator. Had Moses not gone God would have destroyed Israel.
5. As Moses and Joshua started down the mountain they heard the idolatrous frenzy of Israel from a distance. Joshua commented that it sounded like warfare. Last week I directed your attention to the spiritual source of this sinister act. We looked at the dark presence of Satan lurking in the background tempting Israel to forsake God. It was one more example of Satan seeking to destroy God’s redemptive plan for His elect people.
6. Upon reaching the base of the mountain Moses saw what he never could have imagined. He saw his people dancing around an idol in the shape of a golden calf. There was singing and exuberance as they exulted in their idolatry. Moses had seen these things back in Egypt. He flew into a rage.
KJV **Exodus 32:19** – “Moses’ anger waxed hot”
NAS **Exodus 32:19** – “Moses’ anger burned”
7. Moses went into a rage. His anger burned. It was fiery. It was fierce. It was hot. In his rage he cast down the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments shattering them to pieces.
The question we must raise is this: Was Moses’ anger sin?
We know that Moses often struggled with anger. We might say it was his besetting sin. When he was a young man he slew an Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he thought his secret was known he fled to the wilderness.

8. Tonight I want to deal briefly with the subject of anger. I want us to see that Moses anger was not sin. It was Godly anger just as God's wrath is Godly anger. I want you to understand when anger is sin and when it is righteous.

I. There is an anger that is sinful – an anger that must be avoided

A. When it is prideful self-centeredness

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 – “Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own . . .”

1. Most anger is because we feel we have been offended
2. When you see yourself upon a throne with others serving you it is easy to be offended. When you see yourself as a servant it is hard to be offended.
3. How do you view yourself?

Luke 9:46 – “Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.”

4. How often have you been angry because you feel you have not received everything you are due?

People haven't respected you the way you feel you deserve.

Luke 9:52-55 – “And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. ⁵³ And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? ⁵⁵ But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”

Someone was rude to you. Someone cut in line in front of you.

Matthew 5:39-41 – “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also. ⁴¹ And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”

B. When it is bad tempered

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 – “Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;”

1. Some people have an angry disposition – they are irritable
2. Some people are bad tempered
3. God command us to be “longsuffering.”

1 Corinthians 13:4 – “Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind”

This means we are willing to suffer long with people. We must recognize that every human being is plagued by sin. It is a curse, a plague.

C. When it is unjust

Matthew 5:21-22 – “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: ²² But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”

1. Every reason we've looked at thus far is unjust – unjustified
2. You may think in your heart, "It most surely is justified. He hurt me. She offended me."
3. If your anger is due to harm to you it is unjustified.

II. There are times when anger is NOT sinful. In fact, there are times when we SHOULD be angry.

A. Righteous anger is a command of God

Ephesians 4:26 – "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:"

1. "be ye angry" is in the imperative. God is commanding us to be angry.
2. There are times when anger is not on just. It is necessary. It is demanded of God. But it carries the injunction, "**and sin not.**"
3. How can we be angry without committing sin?
 - a. What kind of anger is Paul talking about?
 - b. It takes much discernment and the proper examination of our motives.
 - c. We must be angry at sin. We must be angry when men assault the holiness of God.
 - d. We must guard against self-righteous pride. We must guard against being angry at the sins of others while excusing our own sin.

B. Let's look at some examples of righteous anger – righteous indignation.

1. See **Mark 3:1-6** – Jesus was angry at their hypocritical observance of the Sabbath.
2. Jesus hated hypocrisy – It often stirred Him to anger – **See Luke 11:37-46**
3. He went into the Temple and drove out the money changers in a fury.
John 2:13-16 – "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: ¹⁵ And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; ¹⁶ And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."
4. The wrath of God is one of His attributes.
Exodus 32:10 – "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation."
 - a. The word "wrath" in **Verse 10** is the same as "anger" in **Verse 19**
 - b. Moses was demonstrating the wrath of God over sin.
It was not a personal anger, a prideful anger. It was a righteous anger.
 - c. He broke the stone tablets as a sign that Israel had rejected God and His Law.
 - d. This is precisely what lost humanity as done. They have rejected God and His Law.
 - e. But notice Moses plead on their behalf.
See Verses 30-33

- C. There are times when we should and must be angry
1. Our problem is we are not angry enough over sin
 2. Christianity is not a passionless religion. We should be passionate! Our hearts should be enflamed towards Christ in love and enflamed in our bosom over that which offends Him.
 3. Our problem is we no longer become angry over sin. It doesn't enflame our indignation. We find it easy to tolerate sin
 - a. We should be angry over homosexuality and gay marriage
 - b. We should be angry over the sexual promiscuity in our land. There were 4.3 million births in the U.S. in 2007 – 40% of which were out of wedlock. 72% among blacks – 80% in U.S. Does this make you angry?
 - c. We should be angry over abortion – killing children! Does this make you angry?
 - d. If you demonstrate passion over these things you are labeled as intolerant.
 4. We should be angry that the Word of God isn't being preached with passion and power today. We should be angry that men are turning preaching into self-help seminars. I once saw a church brochure that read, "Positive sermons without the guilt trip."
 5. Where is the passion? I've been accused of being too hard. I've had people come to my office complaining, "You are too hard, your preaching is too hard." Where is the passion?

III. We must be angry over sin, but we must not be mean spirited

- A. Paul tells us to be angry but not in a sinful way
1. He says, **Ephesians 4:26-27** – "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ Neither give place to the devil."
 2. What does he mean, "let not the sun go down upon your wrath"
 - a. Paul is describing controlled anger
 - b. When we think of anger we often think of uncontrolled outbursts.
 - c. Our anger must be controlled, measured anger. We aren't talking about uncontrolled outbursts that so often control self-centered anger – anger that comes suddenly and uncontrollably.
 - d. Our anger must be an indignation that burns within us but not an anger that seeks to do harm to others. Our anger is motivated by love for Christ and compassion upon the lost.
 - e. by saying "let not the sun go down upon your wrath" Paul is describing an anger that is measured and controlled. It doesn't consume us.
- B. The passions of our heart are often the target of Satan's attack. Paul adds: "Neither give place to the devil."
1. Anger directed humbly towards God is a righteous anger

2. Moses was not reacting over personal issues – it was all directed at anger over the idolatry of Israel.

Conclusion:

1. Are you angry over sin? Most important, are you angry over your own sin?
2. Is your heart inflamed over holiness, especially your own holiness.
God hates sin. Do you hate sin? Especially, your own sin.
3. Christianity is not a passionless religion. Pray that your passions might be inflamed more and more towards Christ.
Ephesians 4:26 – “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”