

Anger

If you have been abused you might well experience intense anger. This anger could be a permanent feature of your emotions or it may come and go. Abuse is inherently unjust. Someone has misused their power and their situation to gratify themselves at your expense. Your anger may be magnified if you have been unable to secure some kind of worldly justice. Perhaps you have been unable to tell anybody; perhaps you did but you were not believed or perhaps the legal system let you down. Such injustice not only hurts; it produces anger. What is anger? It can be a feeling of annoyance through to a sense of utter rage.

What does God say about anger? Anger is not a sin in itself if it is a *righteous*. John 2:15-17 recounts Jesus' anger at the way the way the temple had been turned into a market. The Bible clearly shows how God is angry with sin (Romans 1:18). God is angry over sin and as we become more Christ-like, so should we be. That is *righteous* anger. Abuse *is* a sin. It *should* anger us because it is a breach of God's design for and purpose in human relationships. However, the problem with our anger is that, as sinners, it can become distorted which is why we are warned not to sin whilst angry; the devil will exploit it (Ephesians 4:26-27). Feeling angry for how someone has abused you can, if not kept in check, move into an insatiable desire to cause them harm, to seek revenge. Jesus taught that even such thoughts are akin to murder itself (Matthew 5:21-22) and that God alone will deal with the perpetrator (*Romans 12:19: Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord*).

Our anger against abuse is not wrong, anger against the abuser is not wrong but if not subjected to the Word of God we are in danger of sinning. What should the Christian do when struggling with a rage against their perpetrator? The Bible tells us to search our hearts before we sleep and resolve our anger so that we might not sin (Psalm 4:4). The only way to do this is to confess it in prayer to the Lord and ask his help to deal with it for without the power of Christ, transforming this anger and subjecting it to the will of God becomes impossible.

For the non-believer the assumed right to feel angry will dominate and will be encouraged by worldly thought. If you do not know Christ the above thoughts will be at best absurd, at worst offensive to your sense of justice. Your biggest challenge today is not to try to contain your anger over the abuse you have experienced. God knows your pain and the anger it causes. Your biggest challenge today is to make a choice regarding your life in this world and in eternity. He asks you today to be reconciled with Him by believing and trusting in Christ. When that happens, subjecting your anger to His will results, not in a sense of further injustice, but in real freedom from the chains of self-destructive unrighteous anger.